Race to the Top

Application for initial funding
CFDA Number 84.412

EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

submitted by:

State of Mississippi

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

AAPMS	Mississippi Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
CCDF	Child Care Development Fund
CCHCs	Child Care Health Consultants
CCSS	College and Career Readiness Standards
CDA	Child Development Associate
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program
CLASS	Classroom Assessment Scoring System
DECA	Deveraux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschool
DECCD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale
ECI	Early Childhood Institute
ELA	English Language Arts
ELD	Early Learning and Development
ELDP	Early Learning and Development Program
ELL	English Language Learners
FFVP	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
FPG	Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Centers
GED	General Education Development credential
HHM	Healthy Homes Mississippi
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ITERS-R	Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale
ITS	Information Technology Services
MAP Teams	Multidisciplinary Assessment and Planning Teams
MBB	Mississippi Building Blocks
MCCQSS	Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System
MCM	Mississippi Children's Museum
MDE	Mississippi Department of Education
MDHS	Mississippi Department of Human Services
MEC	Mississippi Economic Council
MLICCI	Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative
MS2S	Mississippi Steps to Succeed
MSCCR&R	Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral System
MSDH	Mississippi State Department of Health
MSLPPHHP	Mississippi Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Program
MSU	Mississippi State University
NCEDL	National Center for Early Development and Learning
nSPARC	National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center
OCY	Office for Children and Youth, MS Department of Human Services
OESS	Online Employment System

PAT	Parents as Teachers
PHRM/ISS	Perinatal High Risk Management/Infant Support Services
POWER	Preventing Obesity with Every Resource
PPVT-4	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition
PRAMS	Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring Survey
PREPARE	PREschool Personnel Assistance, Resources and Education
QRS	Quality Rating System
RHCs	Rural Health Clinics
SECAC	State Early Childhood Advisory Council
SLDS	State Longitudinal Data System
SPARK	Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TCC	Transitional Child Care
TQRIS	Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System
WIC	Women, Infants and Children's Nutrition Program

Glossary of Terms

Acronym	Description
CCDF	Child Care Development Fund: Is a federal program that assists low-income families in obtaining child care so that they can work or attend training/education
CCHCs	Child Care Health Consultants: A national train-the-trainer program that prepares child health and child care professionals to train child care health consultants in their state, territory, or community
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program: Is designed to provide health care insurance for children in families without health insurance or with inadequate health insurance and it does not replace Medicaid
CLASS	Classroom Assessment Scoring System: An observational tool that provides a common lens and language focused on classroom interactions that boost student learning.
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale: Revised version of original ECERS that contains inclusive and culturally sensitive indicators for many items. Also, new items have been added on Interaction (staff-child, child-child and discipline), Curriculum (nature/science and math/number) Health & Safety and Parents & Staff
ECI	Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University: Its mission is develop and provide research-based practices and policy recommendations that promote high quality early childhood development and learning for all young children in Mississippi
Excel by 5	Certification process that supports families with children ages 0-5 by encouraging community-based collaborations
FFVP	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: A federal program, which encourages buying and providing fresh produce to students
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Centers: A federally qualified health center is a type of provider defined by the Medicare and Medicaid statutes. FQHCs include all organizations receiving grants under Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, certain tribal organizations, and FQHC Look-Alikes

HHM	Healthy Homes Mississippi: a new home visiting program serving pregnant mothers and parents with children less than 3 months of age
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: A federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities. It addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities from birth to age 18 or 21
ITERS-R	Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale: Revised version of the original ITERS that is designed to assess center-based child care programs for infants and toddlers up to 30 months of age
LifeTracks	The State Longitudinal Data System for Mississippi
MAP Teams	Multidisciplinary Assessment and Planning Teams: Are multidisciplinary local teams in Mississippi that review cases concerning children and youth who have serious emotional disturbances and who are at immediate risk for an inappropriate 24-hour institutional placement
MBB	Mississippi Building Blocks: A private-sector funded pilot program designed to assist existing childcare centers in making improvements to their programs by improving teaching and learning in licensed child care centers; strengthening parenting skills; and improving school-readiness among entering kindergartners
MCCQSS	Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System: Mississippi's current TQRIS
MLICCI	Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative: A statewide organization of parents, providers, and community leaders working together to improve, advocate, build child care for low-income children
MS2S	Mississippi Steps to Succeed: The revised TQRIS system for Mississippi
MSCCR&R	Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral System: Encourages the implementation of an age appropriate curriculum in child care centers to ensure Mississippi's children start kindergarten ready to learn
nSPARC	National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center: An interdisciplinary center, housed at Mississippi State University, that provides an intellectual hub for promoting research and scholarship aimed at addressing complex social and economic issues in the state, region, nation, and world

PAT   Parents as Teachers: A home visiting model that provides the information, support and encouragement parents need to help their children develop optimally during their crucial early years of life

POWER Preventing Obesity with Every Resource: program that encourages governors and senior state leaders to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent obesity among America's children

PREPARE PREschool Personnel Assistance, Resources and Education: the project's goal is to improve the quality of care for children in licensed child care settings across the state by enhancing the professional development opportunities needed for centers to successfully include children at risk and children with special needs

RHCs   Rural Health Clinics: A program intended to increase primary care services for Medicaid and Medicare patients in rural communities, while clinics receive enhanced reimbursement rates for providing these services

SECAC State Early Childhood Advisory Council: from Mississippi's Office of the Governor, this entity aims to develops a strategic plan and to coordinate efforts, programs, and resources supporting children birth to five years

SLDS   State Longitudinal Data System: Its goal is to develop, implement, and expand longitudinal data systems that link information from pre-kindergarten through the workforce

SPARK Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids in Mississippi: An early education initiative that brings together parents, schools, early education providers including child care and Head Start, child advocacy groups, state and local government agencies and businesses for the purpose of ensuring school readiness and academic success for Mississippi's children ages 3 to 8.

TQRIS   Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System: Rating and improvement strategies to elevate the quality of care in state early care and education systems and to support and improve children's development

Application Assurances and Certifications

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge

(CFDA No. 84.412)

Legal Name of Applicant
(Office of the Governor):

Governor Phil Bryant

Applicant's Mailing Address:

Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 139
Jackson, MS 39205

(b)(4)

Employer Identification Number:

Organizational DUNS:

Lead Agency:
Mississippi Office of the Governor

Lead Agency Contact Phone:
(601) 576-2010

Contact Name: **Laurie Smith**
(Single point of contact for communication)

Lead Agency Contact Email Address:
Laurie.Smith@governor.ms.gov

Required Applicant Signatures *(Must include signatures from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency. Insert additional signature blocks as needed below. To simplify the process, signatories may sign on separate Application Assurance forms.)*:

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information and data in this application are true and correct.

I further certify that I have read the application, am fully committed to it, and will support its implementation.

Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name):

Telephone:

Signature of Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor:

Date:

(b)(6)

Lead Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name)

Agency Name:

Signature of Lead Agency Authorized Representative:

(b)(6)

Date:

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):

Agency Name:

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative:

(b)(6)

Date:

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):   Agency Name

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative   Date

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):   Agency Name

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative: Date

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name):   Agency Name

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative: Date

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name)   Agency Name

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative   Date

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name)   Agency Name

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative   Date

Participating State Agency Authorized Representative (Printed Name)   Agency Name

Signature of Participating State Agency Authorized Representative   Date

State Attorney General Certification

State Attorney General or Authorized Representative of the Attorney General Certification

I certify that the State's description of, and statements and conclusions in its application concerning, State law, statute, and regulation are complete and accurate, and constitute a reasonable interpretation of State law, statute, and regulation:
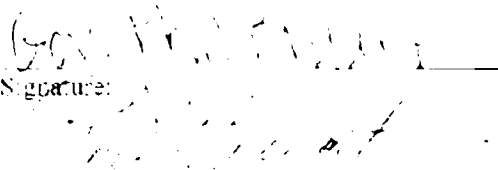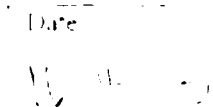
State Attorney General or Authorized Representative of the Attorney General (Printed Name):

Telephone:

Signature of the State Attorney General or Authorized Representative of the Attorney General :

Date:

Accountability, Transparency, and Reporting Assurances

The Governor or his/her authorized representative assures that the State will comply with all applicable assurances in OMB Standard Form 424B and D (Assurances for Non-Construction and Construction Programs), including the assurances related to the legal authority to apply for assistance; access to records; conflict of interest; merit systems; nondiscrimination; Hatch Act provisions; labor standards including Davis-Bacon prevailing wages; flood hazards; historic preservation; protection of human subjects; animal welfare; lead-based paint; Single Audit Act; and the general agreement to comply with all applicable Federal laws, executive orders, and regulations.

- With respect to the certification regarding lobbying in Department Form 80-0013, no Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making or renewal of Federal grants under this program; the State will complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," when required (34 CFR Part 82, Appendix B); and the State will require the full certification, as set forth in 34 CFR Part 82, Appendix A, in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers.

- The State and other entities will comply with the following provisions of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) as applicable: 34 CFR Part 74 -- Administration of Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations, 34 CFR Part 76 -- State-Administered Programs, including the construction requirement in section 75.600 through 75.618 (and requirements incorporated by reference in section 76.600), 34 CFR Part 77 -- Definitions that Apply to Department Regulations; 34 CFR Part 80 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, including the procurement provisions, 34 CFR Part 81 -- General Education Provisions Act -- Enforcement, 34 CFR Part 82 -- New Restrictions on Lobbying; and with the debarment and suspension regulations found at 2 CFR Part 3485

Governor or Authorized Representative of the Governor (Printed Name)

Signature: Date

Eligibility Requirements

The State must meet the following requirements to be eligible to compete for funding under this program:

    (a) The State has not previously received an RTT-ELC grant.

    (b) The Lead Agency must have executed with each Participating State Agency a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other binding agreement that the State must attach to its application, describing the Participating State Agency's level of participation in the grant. (See section XIII.) At a minimum, the MOU or other binding agreement must include an assurance that the Participating State Agency agrees to use, to the extent applicable--

    (1) A set of statewide Early Learning and Development Standards;
    (2) A set of statewide Program Standards;
    (3) A statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
    (4) A statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials.

List of Participating State Agencies:
The applicant should list below all Participating State Agencies that administer public funds related to early learning and development, including at a minimum: the agencies that administer or supervise the administration of CCDF, the section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA programs, State-funded preschool, home visiting, Title I of ESEA, the Head Start State Collaboration Grant, and the Title V Maternal and Child Care Block Grant, as well as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, *the State's Child Care Licensing* Agency, and the State Education Agency.

For each Participating State Agency, the applicant should provide a cross-reference to the place within the application where the MOU or other binding agreement can be found. Insert additional rows if necessary. The Departments will determine eligibility.

Participating State Agency Name (Indicate the Lead Agency)	MOU Location in Application	Funds/Program(s) administered by the Participating State Agency
Mississippi Office of Governor	p. 17	• State Head Start Collaboration grant • Early Childhood Advisory Council
Mississippi Department of Health	Appendix A-7	• Child Care and School Age Child Care Licensing • Healthy Homes Home Visiting Program • Early Intervention Services for Infants and Toddlers (Section 619 of IDEA Part C)

Mississippi Department of Human Services	Appendix A-5	• Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visit Program (MIECHV) • Child Care- TANF Block Grant
Mississippi Department of Education	Appendix A-4	• Early Childhood Education Early Learning Collaborative (state funded preK) • Mississippi Building Blocks • Preschool Special Education Units (State funded) • Preschool Special Education (Section 619 of IDEA Part B) • Title I ESEA
National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (nSPARC)	Appendix A-8	• P20W Statewide Longitudinal Data System (LifeTracks)
Mississippi Board of Community Colleges	Appendix A-3	• ECE certification programs
Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning	Appendix A-6	• ECE credential programs • ECE career ladder

(c) There must be an active Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program in the State, either through the State under section 511(c) of Title V of the Social Security Act, as added by section 2951 of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111-148), or through an eligible non-profit organization under section 511(h)(2)(B).

The State certifies that it has an active MIECHV program in the State, either through the State or through an eligible non-profit organization. The Departments will determine eligibility.

■ Yes

□ No

Introduction

"Research shows that the more a child learns before entering the schoolhouse door the more successful he or she will be in life – from kindergarten to the workplace. We owe it to children – every child in Mississippi – to ensure our early childhood learning efforts provide a first-rate foundation for success."

– Mississippi Governor, Phil Bryant

In the face of significant challenges, Mississippi has made great progress in recent years toward providing all of its young children with access to quality early learning and development (ELD) programs. With strong leadership from the private sector, foundations, nonprofits, communities, and state elected officials, as well as the enthusiastic and sustained participation and significant investment from many partners, we believe that Mississippi's ELD efforts have reached a tipping point.

In the past year, Mississippi has researched, introduced and enacted bold public education policies aimed at creating meaningful improvement in student outcomes. A natural element of the State's education reforms has included increased interest in and understanding of the importance of fostering school readiness at an early age. It is clear that access to high quality ELD programs can have a profound impact on a children's short-term well-being and long-term success in life and work, preparing them to be responsible parents, highly respected professionals, and outstanding citizens; and in order to address the many challenges we face in the state we must make the appropriate investment in our children to make effective services available through the establishment of an integrated statewide ELD system that will truly work for Mississippi's children. With sure footing on a foundation of one of the country's most impressive sets of longitudinal P-20W data and a large body of sound research and compelling evidence, we in Mississippi know what works and in order to meet the great challenges before us and create the ELD system that our children deserve, we are ready to work together to make key changes to our system and scale up our successes to benefit children across the state. While we are already moving in this direction and are confident that we will eventually succeed with or

without an RTT-ELC grant, these funds would allow us to greatly increase our momentum toward our ELD goals.

Owning Our Own Challenges History and Challenges

We understand the barriers we face. Fundamentally, we understand that far too many Mississippi children show up at the kindergarten door lacking the skills and preparation necessary in order for them to achieve, the State must readdress its efforts to provide access to high-quality early childhood education. We also understand that in order to address the lack of school readiness that is prevalent among our state's youngest citizens, we must leverage best practices from other states' experiences and pursue strategies that have been shown to improve student outcomes. This effort, however, must come from our own willingness to create this change, to embrace this fundamental concern, and to finally establish a collaborative state-funded early learning system that will enable us to meet the challenges unique to our state.

Turning a Corner: Recent Progress

We in Mississippi want to reform our ELD system. We are ready for and committed to the establishment of a more effective and comprehensive ELD system. In recent years, we have made significant progress, much of which is unprecedented for our state and some of which is impressive even on a national scale. Highlights of our achievements and future plan (which are explained in subsequent sections) include the following milestones:

- **Excel by 5** was established in 2005 and has grown to 26 certified communities focusing on parental and community engagement
- The state's first **Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)** was established by state legislation in 2006 (and a revised version of the system, named Mississippi Steps to Succeed (MS2S) is in progress)
- The **State Early Childhood Advisory Council** was established in 2007
- **Mississippi Building Blocks**, a nationally recognized early learning program, was developed in 2008
- **LifeTracks**, Mississippi's longitudinal data system, which provides valuable metrics on needs and successes within Mississippi's workforce and public education system was initially launched in 2009

- The **Mississippi Children's Museum** opened in 2010 and provides outreach and parent education across the state
- A revised set of **Early Learning Standards** for three- and four-year-olds aligned with national college and career readiness standards was released in 2013
- **State-funded preK** began through legislation in 2013
- A **Statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment** will be implemented beginning in 2014

Stepping Forward

The time is ripe for reform in Mississippi. With strong support and leadership from the governor, the private sector (see Invitational Priority #6 for more details), agencies, and organizations across the State are on board and rallied around the vision, ready and eager to make changes to the state's ELD system and enact effective reforms. All of the major players are excited about the plan and strategies described in this application. Our plan is comprised of the following integrated goals depicted in the figure below, which will be expanded upon in detail throughout this application. To meet our challenges, we intend to build upon our successes and strengths with bold reform (goals that are ambitious yet attainable and sustainable), placing special attention on key areas and grounding our strategies in proven and promising practices.
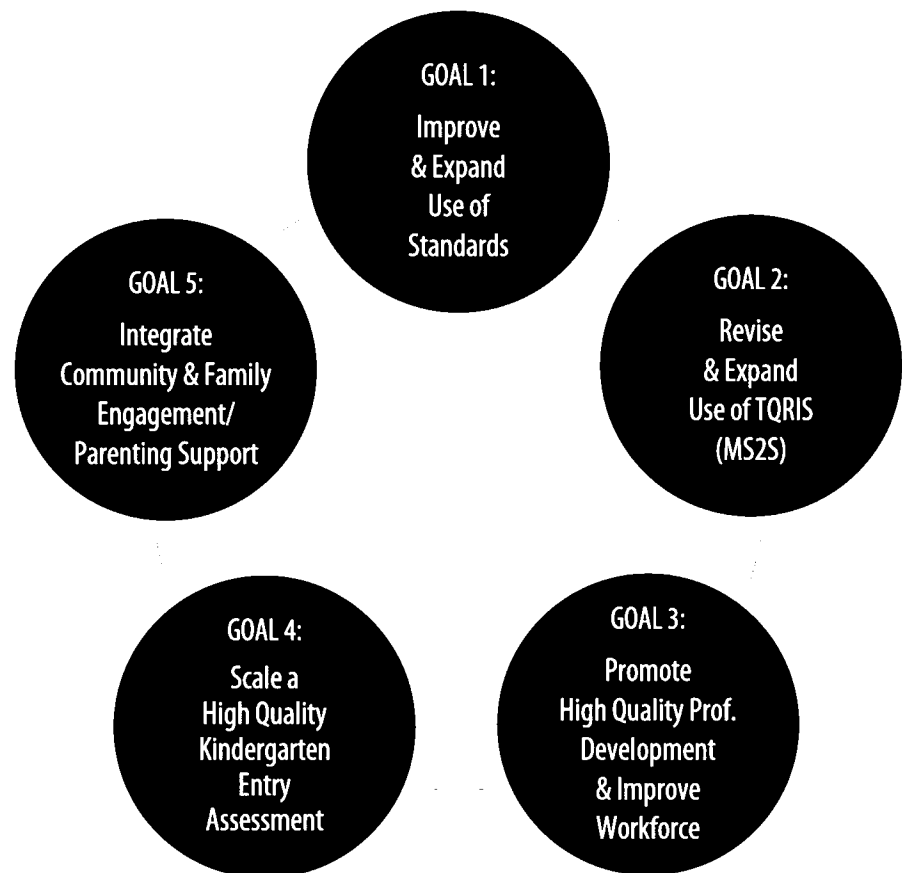
GOAL 1:
Improve & Expand Use of Standards

GOAL 2:
Revise & Expand Use of TQRIS (MS2S)

GOAL 3:
Promote High Quality Prof. Development & Improve Workforce

GOAL 4:
Scale a High Quality Kindergarten Entry Assessment

GOAL 5:
Integrate Community & Family Engagement/ Parenting Support

Goal 1: Support statewide implementation of early learning standards that are aligned with K-3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi.

One of the premises of access to high-quality ELD programs is that all children should have equal opportunity. Some parts of the state do this better than others, but we must ensure that learning standards set high expectations throughout the state. The RTT-ELC grant will help the state achieve this goal by leveraging current available resources and infrastructure. For example, the state will benefit from its statewide data system, LifeTracks, to identify differences in standards and better align early learning with K-3. This process has been done very successfully by some Head Start programs in the state that are now able to demonstrate how Head Start children perform on standardized tests in third grade. The results of these Head Start studies were used to provide feedback to the programs to allow for better alignment with K-3 expectations and beyond. Research conducted over the last several years will also be used to inform how to overcome the barriers to promoting consistent Early Learning Standards, developed by Mississippi education professionals, across different settings. The established partnerships by state and local communities will be used as a channel of communication to convey the value of using consistent standards. The state will also be able to leverage the grant to scale up best practices learned from small-scale projects across the state, including training for childcare centers on the standards through a scaled program based on Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB), the Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC) initiative, the MBB parenting model, the Excel by 5 program and outreach, and outreach to parents via the Mississippi Children's Museum.

Goal 2: Revise and expand state's revised TQRIS system at scale to promote quality improvements statewide and improve access to quality ELD programs for Children with High Needs.

We will revise our existing TQRIS system (MCCQSS) in response to feedback from the field, creating Mississippi Steps to Succeed (MS2S), which will raise the quality and rigor of the standards and ensure alignment with other components of the state early learning strategy. In addition to standards revision, MS2S will include provide significantly more professional development and technical assistance support to the early child care center directors and early learning educators to ensure that they understand the

standards and are able to effectively and efficiently improve the delivery of their services. Furthermore, to promote the understanding and effectiveness of the system, MS2S will also include enhanced efforts to inform parents about the meaning of the ratings and ways in which centers can move to higher tiers (or "steps"). This latter effort aims to empower the community and encourage participation in efforts to improve centers. Our goal will be to encourage statewide participation in the MS2S beyond the state's publicly funded-centers, including, for instance, participation from 100 percent of Head Start Centers, privately-funded centers, and church-based centers.

Goal 3: Promote consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities for all Mississippi early educators to improve instruction for early learning programs.

According to the US Department of Labor, Mississippi has one of the most innovative workforce systems in the country and is well positioned to address the quality of training our early learning educator workforce to meet these ambitious demands of improving quality for our youngest citizens. The RTT-ELC grant will be leveraged to assist the state as we continue to develop professional development materials, such as online training, establishment of training facilities, expanded credentialing and preservation of training offered through community colleges, and the coordination of professional development activities to ensure consistent quality across programs throughout the state. All of these activities will be guided by our data system. LifeTracks will be used to help identify qualified educators for early learning programs, demonstrate what is in the pipeline to postsecondary education, and inform higher education institutions about educational requirements and better articulate programs between two- and four-year colleges. LifeTracks will also help inform our efforts to make training available through community colleges and help in the recruitment process through the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. Most importantly, LifeTracks will help to link programs with children's short- and long-term outcomes. In doing so, we will be able to identify programs that work best in different contexts and environments.

<u>Goal 4: Improve professional knowledge on the implications for child outcomes among early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers on the statewide kindergarten entry assessment.</u>

Under the new Education Works legislation, all districts will now use the same high quality Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The assessment will be selected and adopted during the present school year and fully implemented in 2014-2015.

To complement this new assessment and improve its effectiveness, the state will provide training to all early learning educators across program types to build a developmentally appropriate assessment. In the elementary school communities with the greatest need, "Readiness Teams" will be created, including stakeholders from both the ELD and elementary school systems to assist with support such as training to parent education and outreach. Additionally, the state's kindergarten educators will be trained to effectively implement the kindergarten entry assessment and understand how best to support the learning and growth of a child's education. LifeTracks will be critical to helping Mississippi achieve this goal in two important ways. First, LifeTracks will help the assessment better align student needs as they move along their educational pathways. For example, educators can be informed about the needs of specific segment of child populations and, therefore, promoting better alignment of resources across programs (e.g., IDEA Parts B and C). Second, families, local leaders, and policymakers can be better informed through reports available on the LifeTracks portal about actions necessary to address critical needs within and across programs.

<u>Goal 5: Integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system</u>

The state has already committed to engaging families and has several activities underway. Mississippi has also conducted some critical research to help understand barriers to family engagement. Results clearly show that families with High Needs Children struggle with work-home balance. Many single mothers have the difficult task of working while trying to spend quality time with their children. Many of these mothers come from areas of the state with high concentrations of poverty, and they often must

commute for more than an hour each way to work. The grant will help the state find creative ways to get families engaged knowing the barriers they face.

Conclusion

We are proud of our efforts but recognize that we have a long way to go to close the educational and opportunity gaps for Children with High Needs. The RTT-ELC grant will enable us to significantly accelerate our plan to overcome our ELD challenges. As described in A(2) and other sections, we intend to significantly improve the early learning experience of MS children through 11 key projects aimed at addressing the deficiencies of our current system and achieving the goals of our broader ELD vision. We are ready to reorganize our services, build on the progress we have worked hard to achieve over the past several years, work with our private sector allies, scale up what has been proven to be effective, and use RTT-ELC funds to help transform the State's ELD system.

In sum, we believe that Mississippi is very well positioned to achieve our five goals. The content of this application will clearly demonstrate the enormous amount of work the state has done. As you read about our plan, we ask you, the reviewer, to please keep the framework outlined in this introduction and a few considerations in mind:

- Mississippi is capable of bold and dramatic change. Mississippi has proven that it is capable of achieving dramatic positive change despite the challenges the state faces. The key here is to understand that Mississippi's high rates of poverty presents unique obstacles. When Mississippi statistics are put into context relevant to states with greater resources and fewer barriers, Mississippi fares very well. It is important to understand what we can accomplish and have accomplished rather than looking at numbers without context. For example:
    - Our efforts to revamp the state's workforce development system, for example, have been transformative. Over the past decade, the state has positioned itself to promote more and better jobs and to better manage limited resources while continuing to invest in human capital development. The overall strategy was to identify, promote, and implement practices that operate on both the supply and demand side of the economy and reflect regional differences and needs. The

state's commitment was clear: To improve the quality of life in Mississippi, the state had to focus on practices that its workforce needed while creating access to good jobs for workers across the state and local regions. To this end, the state set out to reform its fragmented and inefficient workforce system. The effort was kicked into high gear by the Mississippi Comprehensive Workforce Training and Education Consolidation Act of 2004 and continued through a decade of strong public-private partnerships as well as the development of an innovative, nationally recognized one-stop system called the Online Employment Services System (OESS), which helps job seekers find employment and training. The results of this sustained effort have been acknowledged by a high-profile national economic competitiveness study, which in 2013 ranked the state as number 10 on a scale of economic outlook – a climb from number 19 just two years earlier.[1] (See the Appendix I-1 for a more detailed description of the state's workforce efforts.)

   ○ In addition, the Mississippi Children's Museum – a 43,000-square-foot learning facility, which has been widely successful in providing rich educational experiences to Mississippi children, coordinating outreach to parents, and providing literacy professional development to educators – was funded with $27 million from private funding sources.

- We view this grant as a catalyst for reform, not the answer to all of our ELD challenges. While $37.5 million over four years would give our efforts a great boost, this grant is not the solution to all of our ELD challenges. The grant would only provide the start-up funds for scaling up our successes. With public and private funding over the last five years, we understand how the grant funds will play an integral role in our long-term goals to develop a successful ELD framework.

- We own our problems and embrace proven solutions. When you own your own problems, great change can happen. Mississippi has taken ownership of its own challenges, and we look forward to sharing with you our plan to not simply put a band-aid on those problems but to create an exemplary ELD system. We feel that this plan and our success as a State will be a model for the country and other states in similar positions.

---

[1] Rich States, Poor States, 6th Edition By Arthur B. Laffer, Stephen Moore and Jonathan Williams 2013

We look forward to being a success story and an inspiration for other States facing similar challenges at similar places in their ELD system development.

- We have a solid plan to make great progress. We are proposing a plan to go from an unacceptable status quo to above average in 4 years and for continued success thereafter. Our primary goal is to improve access to high quality ELD programs for all children by kicking our "One Mississippi" Plan, an ambitious yet achievable ELD plan that was established before this competition was announced, into high gear. For us, this process is not about winning a grant but rather about helping to jumpstart many of our long-term goals.

Selection Criteria

Core Areas – Sections A and B

MISSISSIPPI

A. Successful State Systems

Mississippi has embraced the challenges of reforming our state's early learning and development (ELD) system, and we are committed to undergoing transformational change for our younger citizens so that all children can have access to high quality care, high quality early learning educators, and a high quality place of learning. As a state, we could not have made this commitment 20 years ago -- or even 10 years ago. Our commitment is the result of all sectors and stakeholders agreeing on the same vision and outcome and through cooperation among these stakeholders to tackle the issues together. We have demonstrated our ability to reform our state's infrastructure in other sectors for, most recently with our labor and workforce.

Early learning reforms in the state faced challenges similar to those of our efforts to reform the workforce industry. We lacked any state funding for preK. Our Quality Rating System was in dire need of reform. Almost 10 percent of our early childhood educators had no high school diploma or General Education Development credential (GED). Our standards for early learning were constructed prior to the research-based movement that occurred with many other state standards.

Ten years ago, we decided to make a substantial change in how we support our educational system. We realized that despite the outpouring of outside research organizations and advocacy groups who frequently flocked to Mississippi to offer advice and ideas, change would not come unless the state embraced the need for it. As you will read below, our business community recognized the need for improving the educational system, beginning with the foundations focused on early learning. Much credit has been given to the Mississippi business community, who realized the importance of developing a strong early learning infrastructure to promote state economic success. Such groups, like the 7,000+ members of the Mississippi Economic Council and nationally respected business leaders like Jim Barksdale, helped jumpstart the state's attention to improve the education system not just through large donations but through strong lobbying efforts for state legislation and even co-designing early learning programs and professional development programs for early educators. The call to action was easily heard across the four Mississippi regions. State elected officials, state foundations, advocacy groups,

MISSISSIPPI

and research organizations took notice: it is time to change and we, as proud citizens of our state, must do this together.

As you will see in the following narrative, our state has made impressive gains in reforming our ELD system. These gains are impressive when compared not only to the status of our state's system ten years ago but also when compared to the reforms made in other States. We have aligned our early standards with national benchmarks and the K-3 system. We have passed legislation supporting collaborations for state-funded preschool. We have developed early learning programs that have shown tremendous gains in child outcomes, not just with respect to kindergarten readiness but to gains that last well through third grade. We have developed strong partnerships with all of our child care centers, including all of our Head Start centers, providing forums and communication strategies allowing the state to learn from their graduates' outcomes up to 5 years later.

The overall approach to reforming our system has been focused and sustainable. We have been able to make such strides as you will see, with limited state resources, when compared to other states. These gains and these reforms have been done through an "all hands on deck" approach to this reform, from business leaders, foundations, advocacy groups, child care centers, and community engagement. Everyone has embraced this call for change. The opportunity to apply for this RTT-ELC grant has been an exciting process for the state. If given the opportunity, we look forward to jumpstarting many of our ideas and scaling up proven practices. If not given the opportunity, we will still forge ahead, since we are committed to changing our educational system in the state. And it begins with the early learning system.

(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development

Mississippi has received support from stakeholders from across the early learning environment in order to bring about the successes needed to improve our infrastructure for ELD programs and services for our children – especially those with high needs. These efforts have been unprecedented in our state's history and have now been established within our state's annual budget and state legislation to ensure sustainability, matching the longstanding support of our private and nonprofit sector.

(a) Financial Investment from 5 years ago to present

Since 2007, all of the state's Early Learning and Development (ELD) stakeholder groups, from state and local governments to foundations and private companies, have invested in the state's ELD efforts. The portfolio of investments increased with each year, and the number of supporters. In the last 5 years, we have seen a significant increase in funding for such programs. These increases in early learning investments have occurred despite the number of challenges that our state has faced:

- Despite the fiscal challenges of the recent recession, we have increased spending in Early Learning every year in the last three years by almost ten percent, and we recently passed legislation to support state-funded preschool and have funded $6 million toward improving early learning services.

- Mississippi has benefitted from a strong private and foundation sector involvement with an average increase of 5 percent funding in the last 5 years

Five Year Trend in Overall Investment (see Table A(1)-4)

Despite continuing budget constraints in recent years, Mississippi has continued to focus its resources on investing and creating high quality care and opportunities for its ELD programs. We were able to fully restore funding to our state's TQRIS program (after a 97 percent reduction in 2009 due to the national economic crisis), and have even increased funding by an additional three percent. The state increased funding for evidence-based programs shown to have positive effects on child outcomes, particularly with Children of High Needs.

State Funded pre-K Collaborations

In the last five years, Mississippi has established state-funded preK collaborations. Although we were anxious to pass such legislation, we have been careful to fund the necessary infrastructure for a statewide system to exist. The roots for this effort started in 2007 when the Department of Human Services funded a voluntary early childcare and education grant program that was a collaborative effort among entities providing pre-kindergarten programs to counties statewide. In 2009, the state spent $3 million to increase funding for creating a Tiered Quality Rating Incentive System (TQRIS).[2] The state also funded a resource and referral program that same year. Although the interest in supporting early learning programs was overwhelming from all

---

[2] http://nieer.org/publications/state-preschool-2012-state-profiles

stakeholders in the state, based on the limited state resources, Mississippi decided to phase in its program over the next three years. This came at a time when nationally, state-funded preK decreased by more than a half billion dollars in 2012 – the largest one-year drop ever recorded.[3] In 2009, the state allowed for a three percent increase in early learning spending, creating a pilot program for phased-in preK program using State funds.

While this may seem like a modest expenditure in comparison to those of other states, it was in fact a substantial investment when considering that Mississippi had never had state-funded preK and the difficult economic climate in which it succeeded. In addition to the state support for the Quality Rating System, major state corporate sponsors created the Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) research project in 2009 as a way to help improve children's school readiness by increasing the environmental quality of Mississippi's early childhood programs and the instructional proficiency of early learning educators. Fundraising efforts by business leaders led to the $8 million research project to help child care centers statewide while collecting data for the implementation of a statewide system. Politically, MBB garnered broad bipartisan political support as well as the support of the business and economic development communities. MBB has been working to alter the prevailing educational trajectory of the state of Mississippi.

The following year, the state scaled up the preK Collaborative pilot program to be a statewide support for preK, funding the effort in 2013 at $3 million per year and an additional $3 million dollars for MBB with planned increases over the next five years. This initial investment from Mississippi is comparable to other states' initial investments when they began similar reforms, such as North Carolina in the early 1990s or Washington in the 2000s.

Head Start, a comprehensive pre-school program supported by federal funds, has been a significant part of the early childhood landscape for more than four decades. This comprehensive child-development program serves pregnant women and families with children from birth to five years of age who meet the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Head Start is a child-focused program that involves parents to improve a child's readiness for kindergarten. The program provides a range of individualized educational services in the areas of language development, math, science, and social skills. Early childhood development, behavioral, health,

---

[3] http://nieer.org/publications/state-preschool-2012

and nutrition awareness are also part of the program. Currently Mississippi is home to 21 grantees that operate more than 289 Head Start and Early Head Start centers serving all 82 counties in Mississippi. Mississippi is ranked 11th among states in the number of children served by Head Start.

Although every state will follow a different path with regard to developing a high-quality statewide early learning system, our approach has been successful for sustaining these efforts. The state funding, although smaller in absolute amounts when compared to other states with larger tax bases, is significant and substantial for our ability to sustain these efforts over time. It is clear from the recent appropriation and revised legislation that Mississippi is serious about the future of early childhood education. In Mississippi, state funding typically occurs only after issues have been deemed of highest priority from the citizens and research findings support the investment. Supporting high-quality opportunities for all children in Mississippi has been a priority for the last 10 years, and as such, various stakeholders groups have also made it their priority with regard to agenda setting such as the Mississippi Board of Education, Mississippi Economic Council[4] and various foundations that have been generous in their support improving the early learning state system[5].

(b) Increasing Enrollment of Children with High Needs in HQ programs

The state is proud of its impressive gains with providing high quality care to Children with High Needs, defined as children defined as those "at risk" of later school difficulties, such as children from low-income families or children with Individualized Education Plans.

Although these gains have been impressive for a state that had little, if any, high quality infrastructure for such programs just 15 years ago, we are not satisfied with simply serving the current percent of our children. Our goal is to provide such quality care for all children. Many centers are participating in quality enhancement programs such as MBB, Partners for Quality Child Care, Allies, Step Up, and other technical assistance models. These early learning programs centers are part of 5+ years of longitudinal data connecting with child gains in elementary school. From all of our Head Start centers to all of our MBB centers, we feel

---

[4] http://www.msmec.com/advocacy/mec-priority-issues
[5] http://www.wkkf.org/where-we-work/united-states/mississippi.aspx

confident that investing in such programs will have proven successes in preparing our children with a high degree of school readiness.

(c) Existing Legislation and policies

In order to achieve aggressive, statewide growth that is sustained over time, a comprehensive base of policies, legislation, and practices is required. We are confident that the policies below will allow our ambitious goals and outcomes to be achieved in the 4-year period of the RTT-ELC grant.

Mississippi Education Reform Act of 2006

In order to improve the quality of all licensed early care and education and afterschool programs, the state passed Senate Bill 2602, which established the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System by requiring the Office for Children and Youth of the Department of Human Services to develop and implement a pilot voluntary Quality Rating System (QRS).[6] The original QRS addressed components such as administrative policy, professional development, learning environment, and parental involvement and evaluation. In addition, the Office for Children and Youth was empowered to develop and implement the program. The Office for Children and Youth also administers the funds for the creation of the Statewide Resource and Referral system. This system – in collaboration with community and junior colleges, universities, the Mississippi Public Broadcasting, state agencies and other nonprofit communities – was established to provide referrals for parents seeking high-quality child care centers as well as to provide early childhood toys and materials for families and early childhood educators. In addition, this system established parent education information and training on what quality early care and education programs include. Through the years of implementation of the QRS program, many lessons have been learned. Because our TQRIS was implemented almost 6 years ago, we have been excited for the upcoming planned changes to the QRS to improve and strengthen the standards to align with current research practices and add student outcomes as part of the process. In partnership with nationally recognized organizations such as the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, substantial changes to the existing QRS program will be implemented this year (see Section B for more information).

---

[6] https://votesmart.org/static/billtext/4016.pdf

Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2007

The Early Learning Collaborative Act helped initiate state support of policies and legislations for high-quality statewide early learning care. This Act enabled many departments within the state to join together and identify necessary steps to "ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood education and development services," as stated in the statute.[7] This state legislation, along with federal legislation and funding, enabled the creation of:

- The State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) (described further in Section A(2) of this application)
- Certificates for families to subsidize attendance at any Early Learning Center (described further in Section B(4) of this application)
- Early Learning Guidelines (described further in Section C(1) of this application)

Improving Head Start for School Readiness Of 2007

After Congress passed the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Head Start agencies were required to include in the morning reviews of Head Start agencies, a valid and reliable research-based observational instrument that assesses classroom quality, including the assessment of multiple dimensions of teacher-child interaction that are linked to positive child outcomes. The accompanying conference report suggested the use of an existing research-based method such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). In Mississippi, all Head Start programs are voluntarily using the CLASS assessment.

Workforce Authorization from House Bill #419

Section 37-3-2, authorizes the State Board of Education to issue a standard license to teach in public pre-kindergarten through kindergarten classrooms to persons holding a Bachelor of Science degree with a Child Development emphasis from a program accredited by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) or by the National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC) or by the National Council for Accreditation of Young Children (NCATE). [37-3-2(6)(a)(ii).]. As further described in Section D, we are excited about the number of certification upgrades and recruitment and retention programs we plan to implement and scale up so we can complement the original credentialing requirements in our state. We know that certifications and degrees are not the only quality measure for improving

---

[7] Senate Bill number 2667, Regular Session 2007, to amend Section 37–21–51, Mississippi Code of 1972

child outcomes, and our comprehensive P-20W statewide longitudinal data system allows us to study and understand the impact that particular programs, professional development opportunities, educator certifications, and credentials have on child outcomes.

Mississippi Education Works Program and the Literacy-Based Promotion Act

Under the leadership of Governor Phil Bryant, education in Mississippi has been significantly changed by the passage of an education reform agenda entitled the "Mississippi Education Works Program" (Senate Bill 2568, 2013 Legislative Session) and the "Literacy Based Promotion Act" (Senate Bill 2347, 2013 Legislative Session). The bill addresses many areas of education but serves to show the commitment of the Governor to successfully garner support for a broad scope of education reforms, including early childhood education. The literacy bill requires a K-3 universal screening tool to be adopted and issued three times per year for students beginning in kindergarten. Teachers are then required to implement a rigorous intervention strategy to help ensure literacy success for all students by 3rd grade. Much like the innovative and successful reforms in Florida, third grade students will not be promoted to 4th grade unless they are reading on grade level as defined by the state assessment. The bill also requires a universal Kindergarten Entry Assessment be adopted. The state of Mississippi appropriated $9.5 million to help with this effort.

Education Works included requirements for increased standards in Teacher Prep programs at the Institutions of Higher Learning, Charter Schools, Performance-based Compensation for high quality teachers ($1.5 million), and scholarships for high school students entering the field of teaching with high GPA and ACT scores ($1.5 million). The Mississippi Building Blocks and the preK Collaborative also were appropriated at $6 million. Additional Education dollars this year are $6 million for Teacher for America, $1.8 million for the State Longitudinal Data System (LifeTracks), $300,000 for training of Dyslexia professionals, $22.6 million for the National Board Certification program, $250,000 to help high school students obtain work certifications, and $1 million for dropout prevention programs conducted by Jobs for Mississippi Graduates. Governor Bryant's Education agenda provides clear evidence of a state that is poised and committed to moving forward the education system for children.

Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 (SB2395)

The culmination of prior state legislation and policies helped support the passage of state-funded preK collaborations through the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013.[8] Senate Bill 2395, established a "collaborative delivery model" for a state-funded preK collaboration program. Although there have been numerous attempts to pass preK legislation over the years, the 2013 effort received a major boost through bipartisan legislative support, along with endorsements from the Lt. Governor and the Chair of the Senate Education Committee. This legislation finally provided state-funded preK collaborations, making Mississippi the last state in the South to pass such legislation. Being a latecomer had its advantages, as we learned from the experiences of many of our neighbors. SB 2395 includes requirements for collaborations to form to build community support for preK program development rather than a mandatory system. Historically Black Universities are given priority as applicants for funding to help foster increased preK collaborations in areas of need. The bill authorizes the State Department of Education (MDE) to implement a preK program in the State on a phased-in basis; designates the State Early Childhood Advisory Council of Mississippi (SECAC) in the Office of the Governor to assist the MDE in implementing the Early Learning Collaborative Act; provides qualifications for state and federally funded early childhood education program personnel; and provides for a state income tax credit for contributions to a qualified preK program. Assessments of students and ratings of the teacher/child interaction are also required as per the Senate bill language.

State statutes are only as good their operational implementation. Indeed, the appropriations need to align with the legislation. The implementation of this legislative framework has been guided by the SECAC since 2008.[9] This council has established a strong foundation for leadership and collaboration among all stakeholders of the early learning community and has provided oversight on many of the state's early learning initiatives. Council members represent the Department of Human Services, MDE, the Institutions of Higher Learning, the Mississippi State Department of Health, the Department of Mental Health, representatives of Head Start, local education agencies, local providers of early childhood education, members of the business community, child advocacy groups, and parents and parental advocacy groups. The SECAC has five

---

[8] http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2013/pdf/history/SB/SB2395.xml
[9] http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/eccd_secac.html

committees to carry out its mission for overseeing the implementation of the state's strategic plan for Mississippi early learning systems:

- Data Committee
- Workforce Development Committee
- Coordinated Services Committee
- In-Home Childcare Provider Registry Committee
- Health Access Committee

Because of the strong representation of the council members, early childhood expertise, and the deep early learning experience of the Executive Director, we are proposing to have the SECAC as the overseeing body for implementing this grant (see Section A(3) for more information).

Mississippi's LifeTracks Statewide Longitudinal Data System

LifeTracks is a statewide project that began in 2009 with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop, implement, and expand a longitudinal data system to link data from preK through the workforce in order to create better information for decision-making to improve student outcomes. The system is designed to align the efforts of universities, community colleges, K-12 schools, and early childhood education in terms of academic standards and career expectations with the general intent of: (1) decreasing the number of high school dropouts; (2) increasing the number of high school students who graduate and enroll in and successfully complete a two- or four-year college degree; (3) increasing the number of students who successfully transfer from community colleges to universities; (4) increasing the number of four-year college graduates; (5) improving career-readiness at all levels of education; and (6) increasing the number of students who successfully gain employment. The system has been used for a variety of early learning analyses.

Evidence-Based Practices for Scaling Up to Improve Access for Children with High Needs

We are excited to present a number of promising practices that are currently being used in Mississippi to improve the quality of ELD care through innovative technical assistance practices, strategic engagement of communities and parents, and enhancement of the quality rating system process for assisting early learning and development centers' efforts to improve. These

programs[10] will be presented in greater detail in the following sections. As we present each of these programs and practices that are currently operating within our borders, we are equally excited to share the research-based evidence that shows not just gains with respect to kindergarten readiness but also student achievement gains that are sustained well into third grade. Due to our state's limited financial resources, we must invest in practices that show the most promise to Mississippi's children – especially those with High Needs as defined by Mississippi. Therefore, we have restricted our focus to those programs and practices that have been shown by rigorous research to be most effective.

(d) Current Status in Key Areas that Form High Quality Early Learning Programs

Mississippi is fully implementing all of the building blocks of a high-quality ELD system. With our state-grown programs and practices aligned with national standards and our efforts grounded in evidence gained through longitudinal data and rigorous research, Mississippi is poised to speed up statewide reforms if awarded the RTT-ELC grant. As evidenced below, the state has already taken on the challenges of reform in many of the early learning system components. These reforms started well before the announcement of the RTT-ELC program in 2011 and will continue with or without an RTT-ELC grant. The ELD plan detailed in this application is an accelerated version of our existing state plan. Though we will continue to move steadily in this direction, an RTT-ELC award would allow us to pursue a much more aggressive timeline and achieve greater results much faster than we could on our own.

Early Learning and Development Standards

As early as 2003, Mississippi was able to count itself among the states that had developed and officially adopted Early Learning Standards. In 2012, committees of early childhood experts gathered and created the Early Learning Standards for Three- and Four-year-olds based on nationwide best practices for school readiness. Efforts are in place to create support documents that include activities and parent materials and lesson plan ideas for teachers of children in these age groups. These standards were fully adopted by the Mississippi Board of Education in 2013 and are being used within the Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) intervention throughout the state. The standards are available on the Mississippi Department of Education website, and

---

[10] Such programs include Mississippi Building Blocks, Excel by 5, First Steps, Allies, and Barksdale Reading Institute, along with other programs and initiatives.

trainings for teachers on these standards will continue throughout 2013-2014. The Early Learning Guidelines for infants and toddlers were rewritten in 2010 and serve as the current standards for use in child care centers. Plans are in place to now rewrite these infant/toddler standards and align them with the newly approved ELS for 3's and 4's by December 2013.

Comprehensive Assessment Systems

Under the new Literacy-Based Promotion Act legislation effective July 1, 2013, districts will now all use the same universal screener to identify reading deficiencies as well as a universal Kindergarten Entry Assessment. The RFP for the assessment is out now (October, 2013) and assessment will be selected and adopted during the 2013-2014 school year and fully implemented in the 2014-2015 school year (see Appendix A, RFP Pre-K Early Collaborative 2013-2014 Awards). Under the MBB model, several assessments are conducted throughout the year. Infant and Toddlers are assessed using the Bayley Scales of Infant-Toddler Development – Third Edition and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Toddlers. The Bayley Scales of Infant-Toddler Development – Third Edition is a widely used instrument for infants and toddlers ages 16 days–42 months and is a normed comprehensive approach to assessing children's development. To assess children's social-emotional development, teachers complete the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Toddlers (DECA-T). This 36-item instrument has three subscales (Initiative, Attachment, and Self-Regulation).

Preschool children in MBB classrooms are assessed using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4), the School Readiness Assessment, and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschool (DECA). The PPVT-4 is an instrument to measure receptive vocabulary. It is widely used in many research studies evaluating early childhood interventions. The PPVT-4 is designed for use with children ages 2.5 – 12 years old. The School Readiness Assessment was developed by the Independent Evaluator. It is a multi-segment assessment focused on the essential knowledge and skills needed upon school entry. The assessment targets the following knowledge and skills: Fine Motor, Shape Identification, Color Identification, Counting and Numbers, Uppercase Alphabet Identification, and Gross Motor.

The state's current TQRIS (called Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System-MCCQSS) has several core components that are tied to evaluation of the learning environment. The Early

Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised Edition (ECERS-R) is a well-established instrument created to assess the quality of center-based "preschool" classrooms serving children aged 2.5 -5 years. Classroom quality is also measured in Infant/Toddler classrooms using the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R). The ITERS-R 39-item instrument has seven subscales (Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Listening and Talking; Activities; Interaction; Program Structure; and Parents and Staff). All of these evaluation tools provide a comprehensive assessments for a high quality ELD system.

Health Promotion Practices

Currently, screening is viewed as the Point of Entry into the health delivery model in early learning programs. Current efforts include a physical exam, hearing and vision screenings, immunization/shots, adolescent counseling, health education, blood/urine tests, blood lead levels, developmental screen, nutrition evaluation, and medical referral or referral to another health provider if needed. Multidisciplinary Assessment and Planning teams (MAP teams) meet on a monthly basis to review children and youth in order to divert them from inappropriate placement by providing the necessary resources to keep them in their home and community. Current MAP teams serve school aged children; however, some children five and under have been served in the past. In addition, Project PREPARE, operated by the University of Southern Mississippi, provides evaluation-based training and technical assistance to child care centers on the best practices to serve children with high risk factors related to disabilities, chronic health impairments, and special needs. This is funded by the Mississippi Department of Health.

Family Engagement Strategies

Many Family Engagement Strategies are in place in Mississippi within the projects currently serving young children. As modeled after the Head Start Performance Standards (see Appendix A), MBB families have received home visits that include parent education as it relates to addressing children's growth and development. Parents are provided with packets of information about developmentally appropriate practice and also informational packets about Between the Lions. Parent advocates provide home visits and teach several parenting classes at the early childhood programs. Parent advocates have worked with some of these families for 4 years now and provide valuable insight as to the needs of the family. Most prominent among these issues is that families have asked for more help with primary familial needs. Referrals are

regularly made for social services, pediatric assistance, child care certificate information, and food stamps.

Development of Early Childhood Educators

Mississippi has been using the state's TQRIS - known locally as the MCCQSS - as the initial framework for defining workplace knowledge and competencies.[11] The system has served as a pilot for the state since 2007. Early Childhood Educators are awarded higher levels of "stars" based on additional training and education obtained by the director and or early learning educator. For example, for a Step 5, the highest rating, the director must hold a BA/BS or higher; 25 percent of full-time teaching staff must have a current Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or higher; and all full-time teaching staff must have received 25 hours of annual staff development with 10 hours spent on teaching. However, we realize the need to revise these standards and align them with best practices in professional development, with the goal being to have the highest education level of directors and early learning educators working in our early childhood centers. This proposal includes a new generation TQRIS to be developed and implemented. Thus, with help from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, we will begin the process of revising the standards (to be renamed the MS2S) in November 2013. This revising process will be thorough and involve many stakeholders, including representatives from child care centers, researchers, and, most importantly, parents. We are committed to enhancing our system of quality improvements. For more information about the revision process, as well as the national standards and resources we will use to guide the revision process, see Section B.

MBB has also helped in providing professional development opportunities to early childhood educators. MBB's CDA program has served over 200 candidates to date. Early learning educators are provided a scholarship to complete the online certification process. Since centers are struggling financially, most early learning educators cannot afford to complete their education goals without the assistance of MBB. Upon completion of the CDA early learning educators were awarded with a $2000.00 stipend to serve as an incentive for completion. This proposal includes plans to expand the Teach and Wages program to be able to help more early learning educators complete higher education goals and move into a career ladder that will

---

[11] http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/series/files/34/pdf/490.pdf

benefit both children and early learning educator. Additionally, The Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MSCCR&R) is offered through the Mississippi State University Extension Service. This network also provides CDA scholarships through the local community colleges across the state to offer training online.

These programs provide opportunities for community college coursework toward a Child Development Technology degree (AA) and/or the CDA Credential. Mississippi has been partnering with the national T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ programs to offer these programs in the state. T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® is a comprehensive scholarship program that provides the early childhood workforce with access to educational opportunities.[12]

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

SB 2347 (Literacy-Based Promotion Act) passed in the 2013 Legislative session. This bill requires a Kindergarten Entry Assessment to be utilized by all school districts across Mississippi. A Request for Proposals has been issued, and the tool will be selected by December 2013 for use in the 2014-2015 school year. This proposal includes plans to select a preK screener aligned with the Kindergarten Entry assessment and the Early Learning Standards for Three- and Four-year-olds. The MBB screening tools of Peabody Picture Vocabulary assessment, Kindergarten Entry Assessment, Deveraux, and the Bayley scale of Infant / Toddler Development will continue to be used until a statewide model is developed. These tools provide valuable input in regard to child development at pre and post levels for growth and development.

Effective Data Practices

Mississippi's P-20W Longitudinal Data System, LifeTracks, is a statewide project that began in 2009 with a grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education to develop, implement, and expand a longitudinal data system to link information from pre-K through the workforce to create better information for decision making to improve student outcomes. It is designed to align the efforts of universities, community colleges, K-12 schools, and early childhood education in terms of academic standards and career expectations with the general intent of: (1) decreasing the number of high school dropouts; (2) increasing the number of high school students who graduate and

---

[12] Supported by subproject 9d

enroll in and successfully complete a two- or four-year college degree; (3) increasing the number of students who successfully transfer from community colleges to universities; (4) increasing the number of four-year college graduates; (5) improving career-readiness at all levels of education; and (6) increasing the number of students who successfully gain employment. Section (E)(2) will describe how early childhood data have been integrated into the State data system, and will reference several longitudinal studies on both child outcomes as well as impacts of professional development programs on child outcomes. With MOUs by over 50 child care centers, including all the Head Start centers, LifeTracks has become an important tool for evaluating the success of professional early learning programs and reforms on child outcomes since 2010. The system has been presented to organizations and groups all around the world, from state agencies to the White House, and from research organizations to business roundtables.[13]

Table (A)(1)-1: Children from Low-Income[14] families, by age		
	Number of children from Low-Income families in the State	**Children from Low-Income families as a percentage of all children in the State**
Infants under age 1	26,504	57.6%
Toddlers ages 1 through 2	51,518	57.9%
Preschoolers ages 3 to kindergarten entry	79,390	58.5%
Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families	157,412	58.2%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2012		

---

[13] http://www.research.olemiss.edu/lifetracks-2012
[14] Low-Income is defined as having an income of up to 200% of the Federal poverty rate.

Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs

The State should use these data to guide its thinking about where specific activities may be required to *address special populations' unique needs. The State will describe such activities thr*oughout its application.

Special populations: Children who . . .	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
Have disabilities or developmental delays[15] [a]	12,251	4.5%
Are English learners[16] [b]	6,390	2.4%
Reside on "Indian Lands" [c]	843	0.4%
Are migrant[17] [b]	119	0.04%
Are homeless[18][d]	4,277	1.58%
Are in foster care[e]	1,282	0.5%

[a] IDEA Part B & C December Child Count, AY 2012-2013.

[b] Mississippi Department of Education Student Information System, AY 2012- 2013 (3-5 years)

[c]: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

[d] National Center on Family Homelessness, MS Report Card, 2010
http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/reportcard.php

[e] U.S. DHHS ACF, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), 2011

---

[15] For purposes of this application, children with disabilities or developmental delays are defined as children birth through kindergarten entry that have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

[16] For purposes of this application, children who are English learners are children birth through kindergarten entry who have home languages other than English.

[17] For purposes of this application, children who are migrant are children birth through kindergarten entry who meet the definition of "migratory child" in ESEA section 1309(2).

[18] The term "homeless children" has the meaning given the term "homeless children and youths" in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (425 U.S.C. 11434a(2)).

Table (A)(1)-3: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age			
	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
State-funded preschool Specify: Mississippi Department of Education public school PreK programs. Data Source and Year: Mississippi Department of Education, AY 2012-2013	-	-	5,310	5,310
Early Head Start and Head Start[19] Data Source and Year: PIR, 2013	379	1,533	28,059	29,971
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 Data Source and Year: IDEA Part B & C December Child Count, AY 2012-2013	213	1,794	10,244	12,251
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA Data Source and Year: Mississippi Department of Education, AY 2012-2013	-	-	34,894	34,894
Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program* Data Source and Year: Child Care Payment System, Mississippi Department of Human Services, 2013	638	3,561	5,831	10,030
*These data only reflect children served ages birth to 5. Total children served by CCDF is 29,660.				

---

[19] Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Table (A)(1)-3b: Participation of Children in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State, by Race/Ethnicity

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Hispanic children	Number of Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Asian Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Black or African American Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Children of Two or more races	Number of Non-Hispanic White Children
State-funded preschool Specify: Mississippi Department of Education PreK Enrollment, 2013	148	8	40	3,287	3	0	1,824
Early Head Start and Head Start[20]	1,166	281	63	23,754	8	817	3,883
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C[a]	37	3	21	944	0	42	960
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619[b]	215	15	42	4,766	7	62	5,138
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA[c]	1,391	50	277	18,512	32	356	14,275
Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program[d]	27	11	4	9,046	0	93	848

[a]MS Department of Health Idea Part C Child Count, AY 2012-2013 2013; [b]IDEA Part B December Child Count, AY 2012-2013; [c]Mississippi Department of Education Student Information System, AY 2012-2013 (students 3-5 years); [d]Mississippi Department of Human Services, 2013

---

[20] Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	**Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years**				
	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**
Supplemental State spending on Early Head Start and Head Start[21]	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
State-funded preschool[a] Specify: Mississippi Department of Education State Legislative Appropriation	$0	$0	$0	$0	$3,000,000
State contributions to IDEA Part C[a]	$921,954	$921,954	$921,954	$921,954	$921,954
State contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry[b]	$2,300,000	$2,300,000	$2,300,000	$2,300,000	$2,300,000
Total State contributions to CCDF[22]	$8,840,498	$7,422,938	$7,340,000	$7,340,000	$7,340,000
State match to CCDF Exceeded/Met/Not Met (if exceeded, indicate amount by which match was exceeded)	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs[23]	$19,608,842	$19,614,532	$18,548,965	$17,353,516	$17,353,516
Other State contributions Specify: Mississippi Building Blocks	-	-	-	-	$3,000,000
Other State contributions Specify: Targeted Case Management, Medicaid	$2,800,000	$2,800,000	$2,800,000	$2,800,000	$2,800,000
Other State contributions Specify: State Legislative Allocation for Child Development Services and Evaluation, Mississippi Department of Health	$656,141	$656,141	$656,141	$656,141	$656,141
Other State contributions Specify: TQRIS Rating	$451,526	$15,000	$18,169	$460,000	$464,000
Other State contributions Specify TQRIS TA & Provider Support:	$645,509	$737,509	$386,529	$366,000	$343,000
Total State contributions:	$36,224,470	$34,468,074	$32,971,758	$32,197,611	$35,178,611

[a]State-funded preschool: $3,000,000 was appropriated in the 2013 legislative session for the establishment of early learning collaboratives

[b] Mississippi Department of Education State Legislative Appropriation

---

[21] Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

[22] Total State contributions to CCDF must include Maintenance of Effort (MOE), State Match, and any State contributions exceeding State MOE or Match.

[23] Include TANF transfers to CCDF as well as direct TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs.

Table (A)(1)-5: Historical data on the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Total number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program for each of the past 5 years[24]				
	2009	**2010**	**2011[25]**	**2012[11]**	**2013[11]**
State-funded preschool [a] (annual census count; e.g., October 1 count) Specify: Mississippi Department of Education PreK Enrollment, 2013	4,152	4,811	4,789	5,239	5,310
Early Head Start and Head Start[26] (funded enrollment) [b]	25,601	27,328	27,544	27,667	29,971 (27,599 funded)
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B [a]	10,995	11,912	12,549	12,620	12,251
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA [a]	28,962	31,126	31,967	33,391	34,894
Programs receiving CCDF funds*[d] (average monthly served)	10,730	10,859	10,859	10,859	10,030

[a] Mississippi Department of Education Student Information System, AY 2009-2013.

[b] Mississippi Head Start Association, PIR, 2009-2013.

[c] IDEA Part B & C December Child Count, Mississippi Department of Education and Mississippi Department of Health, AY 2009-2013

[d] Mississippi Department of Human Services Child Care Payment System, 2009-2013.

*Total children served by CCDF includes school-age children to age 13. Children served ages 0-5 is 10,030.

---

[24] Include all Children with High Needs served with both Federal dollars and State supplemental dollars.
[25] Note to Reviewers: The number of children served reflects a mix of Federal, State, and local spending. Head Start, IDEA, and CCDF all received additional Federal funding under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which may be reflected in increased numbers of children served in 2009-2011.
[26] Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Table (A)(1)-6 : Current status of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the State's Early Learning and Development Standards address the different age groups by Essential Domain of School Readiness

Essential Domains of School Readiness	Age Groups		
	Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Language and literacy development	X	X	X
Cognition and general knowledge (including early math and early scientific development)	X	X	X
Approaches toward learning	X	X	X
Physical well-being and motor development	X	X	X
Social and emotional development	X	X	X

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
State-funded preschool Specify: Mississippi Department of Education PreK programs, 2013	X	X	X	X	
Early Head Start and Head Start[27]	X	X	X	X	
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	X	X			
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	X				
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	X		X		

---

[27] Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
Programs receiving CCDF funds*					X
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements Specify by tier (add rows if needed): Tier 1:					
Tier 2:			X		
Tier 3:	X		X	X	
Tier 4:	X		X	X	
Tier 5:	X		X	X	
State licensing requirements		X			
Other Describe: Out of School QRIS		X	X	X	
Other Describe: In-Home QRIS		X	X	X	
*Programs receiving CCDF funds—Licensed facilities must submit licensure documents to CCDF administration. Unlicensed facilities per CCDF administrative regulations must self-designate health and safety requirements.					

Table (A)(1)-8: Elements of high-quality health promotion practices currently required within the State
Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the elements of high-quality health promotion practices are currently required.

Types of Programs or Systems	Elements of high-quality health promotion practices				
	Health and safety requirements	Developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up	Health promotion, including physical activity and healthy eating habits	Health literacy	Other
State-funded preschool Specify: Mississippi Department of Education PreK programs	X	X	X		
Early Head Start and Head Start	X	X	X	X	
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	X	X			
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	X	X			
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	X	X	X		
Programs receiving CCDF funds	X	X	X		
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements Specify by tier	Tier 1: X				
	Tier 2: X				
	Tier 3: X				
	Tier 4: X	X			
	Tier 5: X	X			
State licensing requirements	X				
Other Describe: Out of School QRIS	X		X		
[Edit the labels on the above rows as needed, and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]					

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
State-funded preschool Specify: Mississippi Department of Education PreK programs	• Provide every parent enrolling a child with a profile of every prekindergarten provider participating in the collaborative's geographic catchment area. Profiles must include prekindergarten provider's services, curriculum, instructor credentials, and instructor-to-student ratio. • Provide opportunities for parent involvement. Opportunities may vary across learning collaboratives.
Early Head Start and Head Start	Head Start/Early Head Start agencies involve parents in all aspects of the program. Agencies build collaborative partnerships with parents in order to establish mutual trust, identify family strengths and family goal setting, and to ensure access to other community resources and support services. Grantees train parents in advocacy to they can continue to help their children more effectively and actively participate as they transition from Head Start to Elementary School. All EHS/HS programs are required to hold Parent Conferences and make home visits. Early Head Start grantee agencies assist pregnant women in accessing comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care, through referrals, immediately after enrollment in the program. EHS/HS agencies offer parents the opportunity to participate in policy-making decisions and operations as well as opportunities to participate as employees or volunteers. Grantees ensure the parent involvement and education activities respond directly to the ongoing and expressed needs of the parents and provide opportunities to include parents in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to child development.
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	• Contract and work w/MS Parent Training and Information Center on parent training, provide support and linkage to other support groups (such a Down Syndrome Society, ARC, Coalition for Citizens w/Disabilities), • Maintain a parent advisor in the districts to assist and support EI families, *Provide training sessions in collaboration w/MDE, Early/Head Starts, Zero to Three, ARC for EI knowledge and child find activities, • Hold SICC and Stakeholder meeting w/parent representatives and participation, and • Parent/guardians are a part of all Early Intervention Services that is established on the Individualized Family Service Plan.

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	• Part B funds and collaborates with the Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center to provide webinars and regional trainings on issues surrounding disability, eligibility, evaluation, transition, individual education plans, 504 plans (disability services through Civil Rights legislation), procedural safeguards, and dispute resolution procedures (including the complaint process, mediation, due process hearings, and resolution). • In addition, Part B special education trainings are posted online in video format to allow parents to view them at their convenience. • Part B provides an annual parenting conference that encourages parents to learn about disability topics and how to advocate for their children. • Part B also provides an annual transition conference open to parents to learn about transitions across the life span. • The Part B Parent Outreach coordinator participates on various councils and boards to ensure policies and procedures are developed in ways that are responsive to the needs of families. Examples include the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Intervention (SICC), the Interagency Coordinating Council for Children & Youth (ICCCY), and the Interagency System of Care (ISOC).SPED
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	(Requirements are identical to Mississippi Public School Pre-K programs) State 3 & 4 yr old guidelines: • Each agency shall develop and distribute a parent handbook that addresses program philosophy, goals, and policies. • Teacher/parent conferences shall be conducted twice during the year to inform parents or guardians of the child's progress. If documented attempts to meet with parents or other responsible persons fail, telephone conferences can be substituted. It should be noted that parents/guardians should be encouraged to participate in various activities such as developing learning games for home or classroom use, sharing information with the class about their work skill or profession, and sharing their talents through conducting musical and/or art activities in conjunction with the teacher.

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
Programs receiving CCDF funds	Beginning in 2012, all programs receiving CCDF funds will be required to enroll in Mississippi's Quality Rating and Improvement System. Licensing Requirements: • Parents must have "welcome access" to the licensed child care facility. • Daily reports must be provided to parents of infants and toddlers. • Parents and facility must communicate regarding parental concerns regarding the child's growth and development, medical needs, allergies, toilet training and other information relevant to the child's well-being. • A parent-caregiver consultation is required prior to toilet training. Facilities must inform parents of the following: purpose, scope of service provided, philosophy and any religious affiliation, programs provided, age of children accepted, insurance coverage, discipline policies, transportation and safety policies and procedures, administering of medication, etc.
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements Specify by tier (add rows if needed):	• Star 1 – Meet licensing standards' parent requirements • Star 2 - Provide monthly calendars and quarterly newsletters to parents; provide an information bulletin board for parents; conduct a parent teacher conference once a year. • Star 3 - In addition to the requirements listed above, provide weekly notes to parents; provide a parent workshop once a year; provide a lending library for parents. • Star 4 – In addition to the requirements listed above, provide volunteer opportunities for family members; provide a family resource center for parents by expanding the lending library; conduct a parent survey to evaluate the facility. • Star 5 – In addition to the requirements listed above, provide parents with a monthly newsletter; conduct parent teacher conferences twice a year.

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
State licensing requirements	- Parents have the right to inspect and review any of their child's records or to have a representative do so at any time. - Confidentiality - Screening evaluation and/or assessment - Dispute resolution options and procedures - Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) - Transition process services - Parental consent and prior written notice - Surrogate parents designated, if needed
Other Describe: In-Home Quality Rating System	- Tier 1: - Tier 2: Families are involved and have resources available in at least 2 ways. - Tier 3: Families are involved and have resources available in at least 3 ways. - Tier 4: Families are involved and have resources available in at least 4 ways. - Tier 5: Families are involved and have resources available in at least 5 ways.
Other Describe: Out of School Quality Rating System	- Tier 1: - Tier 2: Bulletin board for parental communication - Tier 3: Weekly notes to parents, parent education training (offered annually), parental lending library. - Tier 4: Parent involvement program, parent resource center - Tier 5: Parent-Teacher conferences twice a year, monthly newsletters

The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in Table (A)(1)-9 describe the current system requirements for School-Based programs. Centers, In-Home Providers, Public-School Pre-K, and Out of School Childcare Providers in Mississippi are governed by individual QRIS requirements. However, QRIS requirements are sufficiently similar across provider type for the QRIS standards in Table (A)(1)-9 to serve as a good example for all current QRIS standards in Mississippi. Please see Appendix for QRIS requirements for each provider type.

Table (A)(1)-10: Status of all early learning and development workforce credentials[28] currently available in the State				
List the early learning and development workforce credentials in the State	**If State has a workforce knowledge and competency framework, is the credential aligned to it?** (Yes/No/ Not Available)	**Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have the credential**		**Notes (if needed)**
		#	**%**	
Credential Type 1: Master's of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Development Programs	No	32	0.5	Includes the number of educators graduating with this credential in 2013.
Credential Type 2: Bachelor's of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Development Programs	No	49	0.8	Includes the number of educators graduating with this credential in 2013.
Credential Type 3: Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Development Programs	Yes	271	4.2	Includes the number of educators graduating with this credential in 2013.
Credential Type 4: Vocational with Acquired State Training and Early Learning 120 Hour Child Development Associate Credential	Yes	594	9.2	Includes the number of educators graduating with this credential in 2013. The credential path is defined starting with the orientation and moving through career benchmarks until reaching the CDA.
Data are actual numbers of educators graduating with an early childhood-related degree from a Mississippi community college or public university in 2013. Source: Mississippi Community College Database, 2013; Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Student Database, 2013; Mississippi Longitudinal Data System, 2013. *Denominator is based on number of child care staff positions estimated to require vocational and college credentialing (n=6,448). Source: Mississippi Department of Health, 2013.				

---

[28] Includes both credentials awarded and degrees attained.

Table (A)(1)-11: Summary of current postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators		
List postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators	**Number of Early Childhood Educators that received an early learning credential or degree from this entity in the previous year**	**Does the entity align its programs with the State's current Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials?** (Yes/No/Not Available)
Coahoma Community College	21	Yes
Copiah-Lincoln Community College	17	Yes
East Central Community College	36	Yes
Hinds Community College	47	Yes
Itawamba Community College	31	Yes
Jones County Junior College	9	Yes
Meridian Community College	10	Yes
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	52	Yes
Northeast Mississippi Community College	4	Yes
Northwest Mississippi Community College	20	Yes
Pearl River Community College	9	Yes
Southwest Mississippi Community College	16	Yes
Alcorn State University	16	No
Jackson State University	40	No
Mississippi Valley State University	33	No
Source: Mississippi Longitudinal Data System, 2013 *Source: MSU Extension Service, MSCCR&R		

Table (A)(1)-12: Current status of the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment

State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment	Essential Domains of School Readiness				
	Language and literacy	Cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development)	Approaches toward learning	Physical well-being and motor development	Social and emotional development
Domain covered? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Domain aligned to Early Learning and Development Standards? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Instrument(s) used? (Specify)	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Evidence of validity and reliability? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Evidence of validity for English learners? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Evidence of validity for children with disabilities? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	N	N
How broadly administered? (If not administered statewide, include date for reaching statewide administration)	All Early Learning Collaborative, Statewide beginning January 1, 2014, with a projection of 100% administration across all state licensed centers by 2019.	All Early Learning Collaborative, Statewide beginning January 1, 2014, with a projection of 100% administration across all state licensed centers by 2019.	All Early Learning Collaborative, Statewide beginning January 1, 2014, with a projection of 100% administration across all state licensed centers by 2019.		
Results included in Statewide Longitudinal Data System? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y		

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State

List each data system currently in use in the State that includes early learning and development data	Essential Data Elements *Place an "X" for each Essential Data Element (refer to the definition) included in each of the State's data systems*						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) *	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Child Care Payment System (CCPS) **	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Child Plus ***	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
R&R MRS			X		X	X	
R&R PDTS			X		X		
Quality Stars (QRIS)			X			X	
Allies for Quality Care			X		X		
CDA Credential			X		X		
Nurturing Homes				X		X	
DECCD Credential			X		X		
Partners for Quality Care			X			X	
Project PREPARE			X			X	
Family Wise****	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Prenatal Care				X			
Early Intervention	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Children's Medical Program	X			X			X
Oral Health/Make a Child's Smile			X			X	
Vaccines for Children/ Immunizations	X						

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State							
List each data system currently in use in the State that includes early learning and development data	**Essential Data Elements** *Place an "X" for each Essential Data Element (refer to the definition) included in each of the State's data systems*						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
WIC	X		X	X		X	
PHRM/ISS	X			X			
Genetics/ Newborn Screening	X			X			
*MSIS—the system utilized by MDE to manage data for the following early childhood programs: Part B Early Childhood Special Education, PreK, and kindergarten **CCPS—This system is utilized by MDHS to manage the Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program. ***ChildPlus—This system is utilized by many Head Start programs to manage child level data. ****The Family Wise system will be utilized by MDHS to manage data for the Home Visiting Program. All other systems listed represent a single disconnected system utilized to collect and manage data for the specified program.							

*MSIS—the system utilized by MDE to manage data for the following early childhood programs: Part B Early Childhood Special Education, PreK, and kindergarten

**CCPS—This system is utilized by MDHS to manage the Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program.

***ChildPlus—This system is utilized by many Head Start programs to manage child level data.

****The Family Wise system will be utilized by MDHS to manage data for the Home Visiting Program.

All other systems listed represent a single disconnected system utilized to collect and manage data for the specified program.

(A)(2) Articulating the State's Rationale for Agenda and Goals

Building on the history of increased state investment and a supportive base of policies and legislation for continuous improvement and sustained success described above in Section A(1), the Mississippi plan outlined in this application is not just an approach for allocating possible grant funds to substitute our current efforts. Rather, this grant application lays out an aggressive yet attainable strategy for comprehensive ELD reform that provides research-based evidence for improving school readiness for Children with High Needs. In the last seven years, we have shown that a state does have the ability to address major concerns in a statewide early learning system. We have demonstrated that these changes can be achieved with limited state resources despite extremely limited resources, and we have demonstrated that Mississippi relies on evidence-based research to allow laser-like focus on what programs improve school readiness for Children with High Needs, as well as all children of Mississippi.

Clearly, we are not satisfied with the gains we have made to date. Our plan of action, outlined in this document, demonstrates our aggressive strategy for improving our statewide early learning system. We are excited that this plan, and the foundation we have built to date, could be a model for other states facing economic circumstances similar to Mississippi's.

As we have demonstrated, statewide reform for improving the early learning system occurs when a state makes the decision to change in absence of new funding. In the last seven years, our reforms have occurred due to not only the full support of all expected stakeholders in the early learning community (parents, policy makers, child care providers) but also active support from non-traditional stakeholders in the early learning environment (state economic council, Workforce Investment Board, etc.).

The culmination of this broad-based support for improving Mississippi's early learning system for all children builds upon the state's framework for change:

Framework for Change

In the following sections, we will outline our state's five goals, called the "One Mississippi" State Plan for reforming our state's Early Learning and Development system. These five goals will be supported by 14 projects with 60 "subprojects" that are repeatedly referenced throughout the narrative and that also have detailed budget justifications and timelines for implementation.

We hope to provide evidence to demonstrate the state's thoughtful and organized approach to our ambitious agenda through our high quality plans for each selection criteria, detailed budgets for both the 14 project and the 60 subprojects, and our detailed timeline for implementation.

Despite our presentation of timelines and detailed budgets, we understand that successful early learning reform does not come from good project management. It is derived from the understanding of how agendas and efforts align to form a unified vision for change. This vision for change will unify traditionally fragmented efforts or multiple state agencies focusing on early learning agendas. Based on our "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning reform, we organize our efforts to align with the Framework for Change diagram below.

In Mississippi, early learning reform begins with strong family engagement and community. We have an appreciation for "doing more with less." Relying on the strong ties that exist within our communities has always been a successful approach for change. Empowering these communities must be connected to a deeper or external understanding. This understanding will be rooted in proven standards of learning and development. Our early educator workforce will help translate these standards and apply them in their practice and their ongoing relationships with the community. We consider our early educator workforce to be ambassadors as well as early learning educators. Thus, this workforce must be trained, prepared, and connected to the larger conversation that exists on high quality care and pedagogy. Calibrating this learning and our understanding of these relationships must be firmly rooted in data and evaluation. In Mississippi, our early learning community has a deep appreciation of all aspects of program improvement, and we have spent over two decades perfecting our analysis to, only recently, start providing us thoughtful reflections about our progress. This framework for change undergirds our approach to project management, project oversight, and project vision for this RTT-ELC grant. This framework has also been applied to multiple successful Mississippi projects in recent past, that attempt to reform deeply rooted structures in our state, requiring fundamental change.

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality and (b) overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates a clear and credible path for the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion

Based on our theory of action detailed above, we have identified five core goals that encompass the "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning reform:

1. Goal #1: Revamp existing early learning and development standards to align with national standards and require their use as the basis for all early learning and development programs in Mississippi.
2. Goal #2: Expand our TQRIS system to achieve statewide implementation in order to promote quality improvement and access for quality care Children with High Needs.
3. Goal #3: Reform current workforce expectations for the Early Child care profession in Mississippi to promote consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities for improving instruction in early learning and development programs

4. Goal #4: Implement a high quality kindergarten assessment that is implemented statewide and that informs early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers.

5. Goal #5: Rapidly expand current successful small-scale efforts to integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system, to provide such programs for all Children with High Needs in the state.

Taken together, the "One Mississippi" State Plan provides a comprehensive vision for improving child outcomes. We firmly believe that in order for Mississippi to provide adequate supports for the whole child (health, social and emotional development, language, cognition, learning style), we must focus on the full range of influences that affect that child throughout the course of the day (home life, community engagement, center or location of learning, educator influence). The five goals we have outlined address this comprehensive approach. These goals, when gauged by the performance measures outlined at the end of each Selection Criteria, provide an ambitious yet achievable plan for Mississippi.

How MS's ELD Goals will Impact a Child's Education and Care... Every Day
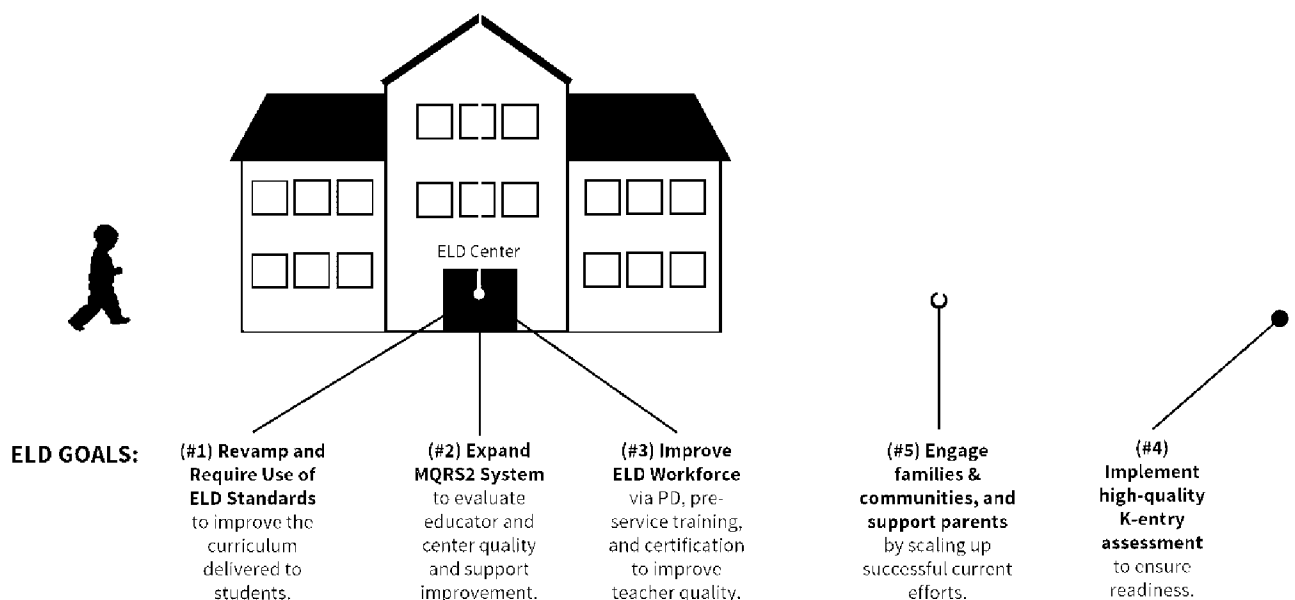
| ELD GOALS: | (#1) Revamp and Require Use of ELD Standards to improve the curriculum delivered to students. | (#2) Expand MQRS2 System to evaluate educator and center quality and support improvement. | (#3) Improve ELD Workforce via PD, pre-service training, and certification to improve teacher quality. | (#5) Engage families & communities, and support parents by scaling up successful current efforts. | (#4) Implement high-quality K-entry assessment to ensure readiness. |

Goal #1: Support statewide implementation of early learning standards that are aligned with K-3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi

- Rationale for goal: Our first goal is to continue to increase the expectations we place on our early learning educators, parents, and our community – to expect more and achieve more in our engagements with all children. With the recent adoption of the new Early Learning Standards it is critical that we now focus on implementation of these standards. Training and technical assistance will utilize the standards in all aspects of the TQRIS. Expanding the training and progress monitoring to ensure results are key to this goal's success. The infant / Toddler guidelines were revised in 2010 and now need the revision to align with the Early Learning Standards for three- and four-year-olds. Successful implementation of the new standards will be the focus of this goal.

- Projects to support this goal: We have identified a number of initiatives that will help support the revision of the infant / toddler standards and help support implementation of the new Early Learning Standards. Although some of the projects were identified through a national scan of lessons learned from other states, many of the projects will be scaled up from existing Mississippi efforts that have been successful, as demonstrated by research.[29] These efforts include revising and aligning our infant and toddler ELD standards to our currently revised Three- and Four-year-old standards, scaling up three privately-funded initiatives that are currently educating parents on these standards, and expanding two state efforts to provide statewide training on these standards for early learning educators.

Goal #2: Revise and expand state's revised TQRIS system at scale to promote quality improvements statewide and improve access to quality ELD program Children with High Needs.

- Rationale for goal: Our quality rating system was adopted almost eight years ago and requires comprehensive reform in order to align with current understanding of what is required to be included in a successful quality rating system as well as incorporating feedback from the immediate "customers" of such a system: parents and child care center providers. Growing concern regarding the utility of the eight-year old system was

---

[29] All evidence of success for these programs and efforts are provided in subsequent sections and reference in the appendix A(1)(a).

evident in the lack of proper distribution of the results, as well as difficulty in understanding the success factors of children from various rating centers when they transitioned into school. Plus, child care educators were increasingly frustrated that the standards had become a checklist of items they needed to address, with little, if any, technical assistance on how or why to address them.

- Projects to support this goal: Parent and child care center voices and concerns for revising the current system have grown to such volumes that the state realized it must assist with this process. Despite encountering a period of limited funds, Mississippi was able to restore a 97 percent decrease in funding to the TQRIS, and has recently allocated additional funds for a significant expansion. We will be rebranding the results of this revision as the Mississippi Steps to Succeed (MS2S). We feel that such rebranding is necessary due to the extent to which the system will be enhanced. MS2S will incorporate not just a list of revised standards but will also offer a range of professional development training, technical assistance efforts, and increased parental communication about the ratings and on how to improve center ratings. This latter effort aims to empower the community and encourage participation in efforts to improve centers. Our goal will be to promote statewide participation in the MS2S based on the strong incentive plan and the in-depth technical assistance provided to a center's staff, parents, community and district.

Goal #3: Promote consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities for all Mississippi early educators to improve instruction for early learning programs

- Rationale for goal: Three years ago, we ran some analyses with data from our newly launched LifeTracks – our state's P-20W statewide longitudinal data system. An alarming statistic was discovered: almost nine percent of our early learning educators lacked formal training, certifications, and, in many cases, a high school diploma or GED. More alarming was the fact that these under-qualified educators were more highly concentrated in areas with greater proportions of Children with High Needs. This troubling statistic served as a wakeup call for the state.
- Projects to support this goal: We know that simply requiring higher levels of education will not change this statistic overnight. That action alone will not address the deficiency that exists among the nine percent. Nor would it improve the skills and training for the

other 91 percent of our early learning educators. In many parts of our state, access to higher education is difficult for our citizens. Further, due to the rural nature of our state, access to qualified applicants for early learning educators can be sparse and, at times, extremely limited. Therefore, we recognize the need to provide these educators with resources and opportunities to help them boost their skills and expand their knowledge. Obviously, we have instituted minimum requirements for becoming an early childhood educator, but we also recognize that there is a need for a comprehensive approach to reforming and training this workforce. By scaling up current state efforts, such as our scholarship and incentive programs, we aim to create a pipeline that will attract qualified applicants to the early learning educator workforce. We also have plans to support the many programs that provide technical assistance and professional development opportunities once these credentialed educators are employed. Finally, we have proposed a number of longitudinal studies to help us understand where such skilled workers are being employed, retention rates of various regions, and the impact on child outcomes by early learning center (for almost all types of ELD centers). As described in section E(2), we are excited that Mississippi has become a national leader in the collection and use of data through our state's ability, using the LifeTracks system, to collect comprehensive data from our ELD centers and link those data to students' outcomes throughout their entire educational career and the workforce pipeline.

Goal #4: Improve professional knowledge on the implications for child outcomes among early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers on the statewide kindergarten entry assessment

- Rationale for goal: Many children entering Mississippi kindergartens, especially those with high needs, show up to class unprepared for the challenges at the start of their education, already behind the curve in basic academic skills (shape, color and letter identification, counting), social-emotional development, and physical development (e.g., fine and gross motor skills). While various kindergarten entry assessments are used across the state, the variation among them poses many issues in the comparability and reliability of results. These assessments are not adequate to support our efforts to assess and continuously improve our revised ELD standards and the validity of our revised TQRIS, as well as the effectiveness of ELD programs including educator training,

certification programs, and professional development. All of these factors led to the realization that Mississippi needed a universal kindergarten entry assessment. This realization became action with the passage of Education Works legislation in July 2013, which requires all districts to use a universal kindergarten entry assessment, and the recent release of an RFP to identify an appropriate tool.

- Projects to support this goal: Mississippi is already in the process of identifying the statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Through this grant, we will be able to expand the use of the current Kindergarten Entry Assessment to early learning centers from the Head Start community and to unlicensed day care centers. Although we realize this is an ambitious expansion of the current assessment, based on our pilot projects in several counties, we know that our approach to comprehensive assessment is not just successful for understanding child outcomes as they matriculate to elementary school; it is also important for community engagement. As we will propose in Section C, our current pilot efforts that support the Kindergarten Entry Assessment provide for a plethora of support services for the schools, including training to help kindergarten teachers to effectively implement the Kindergarten Assessment as well as communication to parents. Additionally, we are interested in using the grant funds to provide annual validity and reliability checks, as well as to integrate measures to ensure that the assessment is culturally and developmentally appropriate. Based on the requirement for a comprehensive data collection that spans across multiple early learning systems and the Mississippi Department of Education, this requires a fully functional longitudinal state data system. The system's current functionality already allows us to connect child outcomes to the professional development experiences of their early learning educators, ascertain which types of educator certifications are associated with the greatest gains with respect to teaching children in grades three and beyond, and assess the differentiated effects of early learning centers on eventual success of their "graduates" in elementary school settings. Few other statewide longitudinal data systems have the functionality and comprehensive data collection that Mississippi's LifeTracks enables. However, we want to improve upon the current functionality with an even more comprehensive data integration, linking with health and environmental data. We also aim to provide a better strategy for communicating these results back to teachers, feedback reports for the early

learning centers, and most importantly, feedback tools for the parents. Mississippi Building Blocks centers currently receive these data and have individual conferences with early learning educators to discuss the importance of using data to inform practice. This can become the basis for the early learning educator lesson plans and incorporated on a daily basis in the early childhood classroom in report form – not just the results of the assessment, but also suggested improvement strategies.

Goal #5: Integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system

- Rationale for goal: As demonstrated in our theory of action framework, we strongly believe that any improvements to the early learning centers, TQRIS system, or the early learning educator workforce will not be sustained if the home setting has not also received the same level attention in the form of assistance and "professional development" for parents. Mississippi's parental involvement has always been strong, especially in the state's rural communities where many citizens collaborate in efforts to establish and improve early learning centers and increase children's school readiness. Despite this history of parental involvement, we as a state have not provided adequate communication for the early learning experience. Although we have pockets of innovation and success with engaging parents, such as parental workshops sponsored by all our Head Start centers or Family Resource centers established in several communities, these efforts do not keep up with the demand across all of our early learning centers.

- Projects to support this goal: In order to support the growing need for parental engagement in the reformation of our state's ELD system, we have proposed a number of initiatives that build upon these pilot projects in some communities. In our Excel by 5 communities, also called our "transformational communities," we want to scale up the successful efforts for communicating the importance and content of our Early Learning Standards to the parents. We also intend to increase the capacity of the state's three year old Mississippi Children's Museum, which has been engaging in parental outreach and early learning educator training on Early Learning Standards in all quadrants of the state. Other activities we will propose include scaling up our use of health and developmental screening processes for all of our young children by integrating routine developmental screenings into well-child visits.

Based on our state's five ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality and outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, we strongly believe the 14 projects that align with each of these five goals can be successfully implemented within the period of performance for the grant. In order to ensure our focuses on successful implementation, we have identified a number of performance measures to support each of the five goals. These performance measures have been developed based on our state's ability to achieve success at an ambitious yet achievable rate. We understand that some of these performance measures have already been achieved in other states. However, given our starting place for reforming our early learning system, we strongly believe these gains will be challenging for all stakeholders in the Mississippi early learning community but still achievable. We have provided baseline measures for each of the performance measures in order to demonstrate the ambitious growth we are seeking to achieve if given the opportunity through this grant.

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the state's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals

Mississippi's strategy for success in ELD is grounded in evidence-based programs, existing strengths, partnerships with all stakeholders of the state, and a statewide desire to rapidly improve the care and education offered to our young children. By scaling up evidence-based programs that are currently successful in the state and leveraging best practices from other states that have already achieved such successes in statewide reform, we are confident that the ambitious goals outlined above are not just attainable but sustainable over time.

Therefore, the process of prioritizing opportunities for investment within the Focused Investment Areas (Sections C, D and E) was based on the alignment of each of these areas with our five ambitious statewide reform goals. We are fully aware that the grant application allows for states to choose which of the selection criteria to address in each of the Focused Investment Areas. Based on our state's five goals for reform, we will be committing to six of the eight Focused Investment Areas, with an explanation below on why two of the Focused Investment Areas (C(1) and C(2)) will not be included in our proposal. The decisions for the selection criteria below were based on recent state success with early learning legislation, current state agency focus on early learning reform, and feedback through our SECAC Council meetings that has broad

representation from state agencies business community, parental representation, and center directors.

RATIONALE FOR FOCUSED INVESTMENT AREA C(3) AND C(4)

(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness

Mississippi Children with High Needs come from the poorest of homes, facing a lack of resources that can prove difficult to overcome. We strongly feel that any reforms proposed, whether that be standards revisions or rating systems for our centers, cannot occur without the realization that a child's health, behavioral, and developmental needs must be met if any sustained growth is to occur. As documented in our subsequent descriptions of our projects to be funded, many of our current initiatives involve accounting for a child's needs first in order to stabilize the challenges they face.

(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families

In 1965, Mississippi created the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), which became one of the most famous Head Start programs in Project Head Start's earlier years.[30] The development of CDGM programs came from thousands of local, very low-income families and parents in Mississippi, most of them maids or fieldworkers, who passionately shared the belief that their children could benefit from early learning opportunities. Almost six decades later, this deep connection with families still exists in many of Mississippi's early learning opportunities – either through centers that are sponsored by the Head Start and Early Head Start programs, or by other early learning centers that have modeled their efforts after the CDGM centers' deep integration with the community. With a rapid increase in state-funded preK or state-funded investments in improving standards or developing a rating system, it is clearly evident that in order to ensure success of any state-sponsored reforms, the state must recognize and embrace the importance of strong family involvement. Furthermore, ignoring family engagement would disregard the approach to designing early learning centers that is embedded within many of the state's rural communities.

---

[30] Greenberg, P. (1990). "The Devil Has Slippery Shoes: A Biased Biography of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), A Story of Maximum Feasible Poor Parent Participation." Youth Policy Institute.

RATIONALE FOR FOCUSED INVESTMENT AREA D(1) AND D(2)

(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge Framework and a progression of credentials

Now that the early learning "industry" in Mississippi has seen a stark rise in numbers and centers, the number of early learning educators employed in these centers has also risen dramatically. With the recent passage of state-funded preK legislation[31], we expect the growth in this profession to triple within Mississippi by 2015. Our community colleges and four-year institutions have been widely supportive with respect to credentialing and providing professional development and training. However, we have long needed to improve our current statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The current framework has been loosely applied through some colleges and training centers, and it is difficult to ascertain the progression of credentials and degrees for our entering students or early learning and development professionals. By focusing on D(1), we expect to complete our revisions to the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and to actively integrate this framework with colleges and centers that train our early learning educators. As we will demonstrate in Section D, our institutions of higher education are fully supportive of implementation of this revised framework, which is currently being accomplished with their help.

(D)(2) Supporting EC Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities

Based on the current progress for revising our statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, we also need to update many of the state's current efforts for professional development of our early learning educators. Currently, there are a plethora of organizations and institutions providing some form of professional development. The practices and frameworks used by these efforts range from rigorous and based on high quality standards, exceeding the current state framework, to poorly aligned with the state's framework. Through our efforts to integrate all professional development through a proposed certification process managed by the Mississippi Department of Education (see Section D(2) for more details), we will now have the ability not just to develop and maintain a rigorous Workforce Knowledge Framework aligned to national standards but also to scale up programs that are currently being supported by MDE such as our T.E.A.C.H. program and our scholarship opportunities provided through programs like Mississippi Building Blocks. We will also be able to measure the fidelity of implementation

---

[31] http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2013/pdf/history/SB/SB2395.xml

through our use of LifeTracks – our state's P-20W longitudinal data system. LifeTracks already has the functionality to link early learning educators with the professional development courses they attend. It also has the ability to match these educators with the children they teach at the center.

RATIONALE FOR FOCUSED INVESTMENT AREA E(1) AND E(2)

(E)(1) Understanding status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry
Mississippi has completed the pilot testing of its statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment, but currently, this instrument is voluntarily implemented by centers that are not state-funded. Our current efforts related to the assessment have been focused primarily on expanding the current assessments in use (ITERS-R and ECERS-R) to expand beyond environmental factors and include all five domains for school readiness. Although there are promising practices of developed assessments in use by our Mississippi Building Blocks centers as well as our Head Start centers, we are interested in scaling up these current efforts to include in our state's comprehensive Kindergarten Assessment tool (to ensure multiple assessments are being used). These efforts are currently expected to be funded through the use of federal and state dollars that are not associated with this grant; however, we do want to schedule annual validity and reliability checks to ensure these assessments are adequate for measuring school readiness. These annual evaluations would be done through external means. Further, we aim to expand our efforts for training early learning educators and kindergarten teachers, to prepare them for understanding these new assessments and how to integrate these results into their current preparation of their children and students.

(E)(2) Building or enhancing an Early Learning and Development system to improve instruction, practices
Mississippi has been recognized as a national leader for our statewide longitudinal data system called LifeTracks[32] based on comprehensive data collection and the system's ability to link teacher and child outcomes from birth to workforce. The system's success is a result of collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including state agencies, local school districts, and other organizations. LifeTracks is managed and operated through the nonprofit National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) – an interdisciplinary center that

---

[32] http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/msp20.pdf

provides an intellectual hub for promoting research and scholarship aimed at addressing complex social and economic issues in the state, region, nation, and world. The center, operated through Mississippi State University, has engaged in over 40 different MOUs with organizations ranging from state agencies to child care centers (See Section E(2) for more details). It has become a critical tool in policy analysis for our state. We want to extend the reporting and analysis functions to provide reporting back to communities, parents, and early learning educators, based on the newly collected data from our proposed statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment, as well as our state's tiered quality rating system, MS2S, which will provide reports back to parents and communities engaged in improving the current infrastructure of our early learning centers.

RATIONALE FOR NOT SELECTING FOCUSED INVESTMENT AREA C(1) AND C(2)

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards

Mississippi's ELD standards are a long-standing foundational component for many other parts of the statewide early learning system. In the last year, the state has provided over $1 million the revision of our Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards to be aligned with high quality, national standards. We have already committed state funds to also revise the infant and toddler standards in early 2014. The standards revision process the last two years has also become a focal point for professional development for our early learning educator workforce as well as a communication tool used for parental education in many of our piloted Head Start parent workshops. Therefore, based on the significant work that Mississippi has already completed or has slated to be completed, we will not propose activity to be funded through this grant for Focused Investment Area C(1), but will continue to reference current accomplishments or areas that will be improving our standards through state funds.

(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems

Prior to comprehensive state funding beginning in 2010, the state has benefited from several foundations, nonprofits, and technical assistance organizations coming together to support the identification and developmental needs of our Children with High Needs. Through the use of our planned comprehensive assessment system aligned with our state's Goal #4: "Scale a high quality kindergarten assessment that informs early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers," we have the unique ability to collect such comprehensive

assessment data and pair it with the plethora of other data we collect. This information, available through our LifeTracks data system, helps us understand the child's development and environmental well-being.[33] Given the state's history of this combined effort of outreach and training by our stakeholder groups, combined with our comprehensive understanding of longitudinal data, we are committed to supporting the effective use of this comprehensive assessment data in order to inform our parents and educators and, ultimately, to support our children's sustained developmental growth.

(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning across the state

Mississippi has a long standing governance structure that currently facilitates interagency collaboration among all of the participating state agencies listed in this application, as well as the other public and private entities that have long been supporters of our ELD system. The RTT-ELC grant will be managed through an extension of this existing governance structure, with lead state agencies maintaining their current responsibilities and oversight. Because many of the efforts we discuss in this application are either scaling up highlight programs or initiating revisions and evaluations to existing practices, this governance structure does not require the state to create new councils or advisory groups or compete with any existing collaborative structure. The current governance model that has been in place for the last six years, with respect to coordinating early learning efforts, would be a logical model if awarded this grant.

(a) Sustainable and effective Governance structure

In 2007, Governor Haley Barbour established the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) of Mississippi to develop a strategic plan to coordinate efforts, programs, and resources supporting children birth to age five. This council continues to identify opportunities and barriers for collaboration and coronation among the programs and agencies within the state. The SECAC is located in the Office of the Governor to ensure access to the Governor and other key policymakers. Based on the broad support from stakeholders across the state, from public to private sector, the SECAC has been able to provide a forum for ideas, discussions, and governance over multiple early learning efforts. The SECAC consists of representatives from

---

[33] http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/msp20.pdf

state agencies responsible for children's education and care, educational professionals, policy makers, and other important groups, including:

- Early Care and Education Centers
- Parental Advocacy Groups and Parents Representatives
- Early Intervention Services
- Institutions of Higher Learning
- Local Education Agencies
- MS Department of Education
- MS Department of Health
- MS Department of Human Services
- MS Department of Mental Health
- MS Extension Services
- MS Head Start Association
- MS Head Start Collaboration Office
- Nonprofit Social Service Agencies
- Policy Advisors
- Private Sector Agencies and Leaders

The SECAC has been instrumental in organizing and promoting collaboration among the state's many efforts and initiatives. It produces a publicly available annual report that identifies the accomplishments from the previous year as well as priorities for the following year, based on the SECAC's five committees:

- Data Committee
- Workforce Development Committee
- Coordinate Services Committee
- In-Home Childcare Provider Registry Committee
- Health Access Committee

The SECAC is widely viewed as a respected and appropriate organization within the Office of the Governor for managing the implementation of many of our existing early learning processes, as well as the possible implementation of this grant. The SECAC reviews any proposed change

to policy, programs, or regulations in Mississippi, with respect to the state early learning goals and objectives. The strategy for such changes must be consistent with the state's overall goals. Any disputes or disagreements from this review process would be resolved through a formal review by SECAC in order to understand the issues and make a final decision on how to proceed. As a state agency, the Office of the Governor currently manages almost $100 million of federal grants, and has ample staff, policies, and procedures to handle the state agency responsibility for effectively overseeing this grant.

In order to support SECAC's role as project oversight, it will utilize the services of external firm(s) to assist the state of Mississippi with two important functions: 1) governing this grant through proven performance management strategies and 2) understanding and respecting the principles of change management that must occur for Mississippi to achieve successful and sustainable whole-state reform of its early learning system. Because this grant, like other Race to the Top grants, challenge states to address all areas of reform with their education sector, we understand the stress this places on a state. In conversation and studying plans from the RTT K12 grantees like Massachusetts and Tennessee, we realized the importance for the state to have an organized focus on performance management, not just project management. This will help Mississippi approach this grant not from a compliance perspective but rather a process of continuous improvement. In conversations with Colorado and their attempt to build a statewide longitudinal data system that spanned several sectors and agencies, we learned about their focus on change management. They set aside funds to specifically address the need to study, respect, and build into their processes the principles of change management, and how aggressive reform must respect such principles for successful change to occur.[34]

The Executive Director of SECAC, Dr. Laurie Smith, is also the Governor's Senior Education Policy Advisor and was formerly the Executive Director of Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB), the state's comprehensive early learning program that has received national attention for its well documented success of child outcomes. Dr. Smith will lead the SECAC's oversight of the implementation of this grant, helping to resolve any disputes and working directly with the Governor to ensure success of the many ambitious goals and achievable projects. In order for the

---

[34] Supported by subproject 1b

grant to be successfully implemented from a project director standpoint, the SECAC will contract this position to support Dr. Smith and SECAC from a day-to-day project management of the grant through the state Early Childhood Institute (ECI), a unit of the Mississippi State University's College of Education. ECI has a long standing history in the state developing and providing research-based practices and policy recommendations that promote high quality ELD for all young children in Mississippi.[35] Because ECI is currently involved with many of the early learning projects that are proposed in this application, as well as have a working relationship with SECAC, we believe this is the strongest model for project governance to ensure sustainability after the grant, rather than importing a new position into this important role.

---

[35] Supported by subproject 1a

State Leadership
Early Learning &
Development (ELD)

Key Strategies
RTT-ELC & ELD

Strategic Products
& Recipients of
ELD Providers

LEAD AGENCY

State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) (Office of the Governor)

"One Mississippi" Mississippi's Statewide Plan for Reforming the Early Learning System

National Strategic Planning and Analysis Center (nSPARC)

Mississippi Department of Human Services

Mississippi Community Colleges

Mississippi State Department of Health

Mississippi Department of Education

Institutes of Higher Learning

Head Start Centers & Licensed Childcare Centers

Mississippi Children Ages 0 - 5

As designated in the chart above, we have proposed a governance structure that identifies SECAC as the overseeing organization to help align the participating organizations, resolve disputes, and ensure successful grant implementation. ECI has been identified as the project director for the overall grant. The participating state agencies will be responsible for executing the relevant projects that will be funded through the grant. In all levels of oversight, each organization or entity has been in existence for at least six years and is fully sustainable beyond the grant. The relationships and dynamics of the participating state agencies, as well as the role of SECAC, have also been in place for the past six years. We strongly believe that this governance structure will be seamless and sustainable, allowing the state to ensure successful implementation of the grant during the grant period and to continually improve our early learning and development system beyond the grant period.

(b) Evidence of Partner Agency Support

Our MOU clearly states the role of the SECAC with respect to facilitating and coordinating across participating state agencies and organizations, which is necessary to implement the state's five goals. All participating state agencies and organizations have signed the application's "Model MOU," which can be found in Appendix A-3 through A-10. In addition, we have included several letters of support from offices or organizations within these agencies to demonstrate the overwhelming support for this application and, more importantly, for achieving Mississippi's aggressive but doable early learning reforms.

(c) Stakeholder Involvement

As described in Sections A(1) and A(2), Mississippi has benefited from a long history of cross-sector collaboration for improving our ELD system. As previously discussed, the state's efforts over the last five years are largely the product of broad external stakeholder involvement from our business community, advocacy organizations, and local communities. This cross-sector push has been instrumental in many of our recent state legislation allocations for early learning, despite our recent crisis in state funding. As documented in the Appendix A, we are proud that we have gathered letters of support from almost 100 stakeholder groups, from early learning centers to research organizations.

We are confident that this comprehensive level of support existed well before this competition and will be sustained long after the grant period would be completed. Our engagement with the early learning system began through relationships with the parents and communities, not with State legislation or funding. This grassroots effort, which has been sustained for over four decades,[36] has been adopted by the foundations and business community as a high priority for the state.

Participating State Agencies:

- Mississippi Department of Education
- Mississippi Department of Human Services
- Mississippi Department of Health
- Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning
- Mississippi Board for Community Colleges
- National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (nSPARC)

(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant

Mississippi will effectively and efficiently use funds from the start to achieve and sustain the five goals of our state plan. We are confident that Mississippi has developed an operational budget that will allow SECAC, the fiscal agent and overseer of all project implementation, to directly oversee and control all core aspects of the plan. As SECAC is under the Office of Governor, SECAC will utilize the same policies and safeguard procedures this state agency has used to monitor other federal grants, which have received stellar performance reviews from their annual audits. Proper fiscal management of all funds, federal or state, has been a priority for Governor Phil Bryant, who was the state's auditor for over ten years.

---

[36] Greenberg, P. (1990). "The Devil Has Slippery Shoes: A Biased Biography of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), A Story of Maximum Feasible Poor Parent Participation." Youth Policy Institute.

"A lot of leaders talk about adapting a private sector business model within government, but in the application of more than 4.6 billion in federal recovery funds, Mississippi can take pride in the fact that a private sector model was not only contemplated, but implemented successfully.

The numbers testify to the states nimble, well-oiled recovery apparatus. More than 40,000 homes constructed, rehabilitated or financed. More than 200 brick and mortar infrastructure projects completed. All of this with less than ONE TENTH of ONE percent in confirmed fraud, with nearly half of this recovered through restitution. The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners 2012 Report to the Nation points out that companies lose anywhere from 5 to 7 percent of top line revenue annually due to fraud. In Mississippi, this was .005 percent.

The record has made Mississippi a national leader and often consulted state in the years since a Hurricane Katrina. Subsequent disasters like Hurricane Sandy last year along the Atlantic coast as well as flooding and other storms have compelled other states to model their own recovery programs after those successfully formulated and managed in Mississippi.

Specifically Mississippi's design of preventive and detective internal controls within processes and systems, along with end-to-end accountability systems, have been the key to Mississippi's low fraud rate and timely disbursals. The state made a point of having financial professionals from the private sector design implementable and enforceable controls, which track and measure production simultaneously with product delivery.

(a) Use of funds from non-RTT-ELC sources

As demonstrated in the chart below, the RTT-ELC grant funds of $37.5 million helps supplement existing non-grant funds we plan to spend on the 14 projects that will fulfill the five overall goals. The history of state funding through public and private efforts has averaged approximately $20 million dollars per year. If awarded the RTT-ELC grant, the approximate $9 million per year would be significant in providing a boost to support our current efforts to achieve our five state goals.

(b) Please see Budget narrative for a full response to this criteria

(c) Evidence of sustainability of funds

Given the extremely difficult fiscal environment that has faced the nation and the state over the last three years, Mississippi has demonstrated its commitment to establishing a sustained funding source and priority objectives for supporting our early learning system. Although we realize that many states recently experienced similar budget crises, we hope that the state efforts to initialize and pass legislation and provide funding for this effort will be recognized as a true commitment to our state's youngest citizens. We have benefited from a supportive business community,

whose support and funding has helped initialize and sustain many of the efforts described in this application. Given the passage of four key pieces of state legislation in the last two years the state is fully prepared to take on this responsibility despite limited funding.

Given the recent state support supporting legislation and committing funds to reform our early learning system, we understand the challenges we will face in sustaining this type of effort as we significantly scale up our programs and initiatives. Therefore, we have proposed funding for the 14 projects that support the state's five early learning goals, with the assumption that we should:

- Maximize grant dollar funding for one-time or initial costs rather than for activities that would require significant sustaining once the RTT-ELC grant concludes;
- Focus the RTT-ELC grant dollars on current scale-up activities that the state has committed to find in subsequent state budgets beginning in 2015 – the next fiscal year for approved state budget; and
- Focus on supplementing, not supplanting, activities and projects that allow for public and private funds to sustain once the grant includes.

Further explained in the Budget Narrative section, we propose funding many projects for activities that can be classified as one-time costs or activities that would be completed within the grant period. These include ideas such as the expansion of our state's P-20W longitudinal data system, LifeTracks, establishing expanded credentialing programs in our state's community colleges, and creation of an Office of Early Learning in the Department of Education contingent upon being awarded the grant. Many of the research studies we propose will require initial funding for analysis of possible data collections or funding to start up these analyses, but the responsibility of communicating and distributing these reports would be assigned to the lead state agencies. By structuring our projects such that the initial funding would be covered by the RTT-ELC grant, Mississippi will minimize the potential for a "funding cliff" that would occur at the end of the grant period.

As described in Sections A(1) and A(2), the state has been aggressive in its efforts to support the rapid expansion of high-quality care for our early learning system. With state budget funding increasing by 100 percent in the last two years, and with expected support to continue to increase by 100 percent over the next two years, we are able to structure the expected funding to transition from the RTT-ELC grant funds to state funding support. Because this state funding

will not be available for another two fiscal years, we have structured the budget request for this grant in a way that supports the initialization and scaling up of activities until state funding is made available. Examples include the proposed revisions to the state's tiered quality rating and improvement system. Although some state funds have been allocated for revising the TQRIS this fiscal year, with expected state funding to increase with the 2015 fiscal budget, we hope to initialize many of the expanded professional development supports for our centers, as well as to incentivize many of the non-publicly funded centers to participate, until state funding can support such activity.

We should state that we are hopeful and will receive state support by the end of the grant in order to sustain 100 percent of the activities and efforts proposed in this grant application. Generating approximately $9 million in state support to sustain this work is achievable and attainable, especially in a state where there has been a rapid increase in state funding for early learning systems. At the same time, like all other states, it is difficult to predict state budgets and projections five years out. Current projections have been quite positive, forecasting increased revenue. Based on the passage of four key pieces of state legislation in the last three years, we are not only optimistic but confident that broad state support for early learning has finally turned a corner in Mississippi. This state support is not measured just by legislation but also by dollars.

As demonstrated in the substantial list of letters of support from stakeholders, there is a unanimous commitment from the state's entire early learning and developing community to achieve the ambitious goals outlined in this plan. In gathering letters of support and general interest about our states five goals, we found no early learning intermediary organization, government official, afterschool provider or day care provider, or any other advocacy group or parent organization that did not support our efforts to ambitiously reform our early learning agenda. In large part, this broad support is due to the fact that all of these stakeholder groups embrace this challenge and have done so well before this grant application was established. As a state, we are approaching this possibility of funding to help us to rapidly advance our five early learning goals. We are fully confident that the possible awarding of this grant will help us achieve our goals in four years so that we can begin to focus on our next phase of ELD goals.

Finally, we want to highlight our efforts to focus on sustaining this grant beginning in Year 1 of the grant. First, we have a specific project dedicated to providing an annual assessment of our efforts to sustain many of the activities and initiatives proposed in this application. Based on our own experiences with such competitive federal grants and our conversations with our peer States who have won Race to the Top grants, we know sustainability cannot be a focus during Year 3 or 4 of the grant. We must be disciplined to focus on it during the start up. This contract will allow an external firm to assess our efforts and progress on an annual basis and provide an evaluation and a list of recommendations throughout the grant period, not just in the final years.[37] We also plan to implement our own "peer network" of states we can rely on for advice, lessons learned, and feedback on our strategies and proposed ideas. This peer network would encompass other Race to the Top states, as well as states that have been identified to be successful with implementing specific programs that fit our plan. Although we feel confident in many of the programs and ideas proposed, we also understand the power of a peer network. With respect to sustainability, this network will help further Mississippi's goals to join the national conversation for reforming early learning systems.[38] Further details on how we will use this peer network are described in each of the selection criteria.

---

[37] Supported by subproject 1c
[38] Supported by subproject 1d

B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

B(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide TQRIS

Mississippi has made substantial progress toward developing an early learning and development (ELD) system that supports high quality, accountable programs for all children. A key driver for our understanding of the quality of the state's centers was the development of the state's current TQRIS. Since 2007, the state's current TQRIS has been a voluntary program for licensed child care centers and additional components that have been built to support a variety of different centers such as in-home providers and after-school programs. Despite the state's current TQRIS being launched as a voluntary system, we have benefitted from over 35 percent participation from our centers, ranking Mississippi among the top half of states allowing for voluntary participation.[39] With the proposed goals and projects for this application, we have outlined a plan to increase enrollment to 100 percent for all school-based early learning centers and 100 percent participation for all Head Start centers, as well as significantly increasing the current participation of private child care centers throughout the state. The state's current TQRIS provides a common set of high expectations and quality standards focusing on five criteria:

- Administrative Policy
- Professional Development
- Learning Environments
- Parent Involvement
- Evaluation

The major components of the system include the education level of the early learning educator and director, developmentally appropriate high quality classrooms, the use of the early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers, and the Early Learning Standards for three- and four-year-olds, which were created in 2010 and provide best practices in early childhood.

---

[39] http://qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/StateProfiles_0.pdf

Transitioning to "Mississippi Steps to Succeed" (MS2S)

Based on our lessons learned from the past five years of use, as well as active involvement of and feedback from our childcare centers, Mississippi has planned significant revisions to the state's current TQRIS.[40] In November 2013, the state will begin its process for a redesign of the current rating system and rebrand it as the "Mississippi Steps to Succeed" (MS2S). This beginning of the revision process will be conducted through a contract to the nationally recognized Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG). This will be the most substantial revision to the original system since its inception in 2007. The newly redesigned MS2S program will support two important goals:

1. Raising the quality and rigor of the MS2S standards and ensuring alignment with other components of the state early learning strategy[41]
2. Providing significantly more professional development and technical assistance support to the early child care center directors and early learning educators so they are able to effectively and efficiently improve the delivery of their services[42]

Due to the sensitivities experienced with revising a TQRIS that has been in place since 2007, we understand the need to actively involve our child care centers and parents as active participants in the designing process. Therefore, this upcoming work planned with FPG includes regularly scheduled focus groups, feedback sessions, and other processes to ensure that MS2S involves all key stakeholders in meaningful ways. The contract work with FPG is scheduled to begin in November 2013. Because the push to significantly revise the state's current TQRIS was originally sparked by child care centers, we fully expect to benefit from their active involvement beginning in November of this year. It is important to note that regardless of the outcome of this grant application, the state has fully committed to revising our current TQRIS.

We also recognize the possible concern from addressing a revision to our TQRIS without the process complete. However, with our years of experience implementing a pilot program along with the data to help inform the revisions, we have the expertise and the personnel to ensure a

---

[40] Supported through subproject 5b
[41] Supported through subproject 2b, 5c, and 5d
[42] Supported through subproject 7a, 7b, 7d, and 7e

successful transition. The recent legislation passed related to early childhood education indicates a strong support for stakeholders right now. Changes in the TQRIS are necessary and the time is right to implement them now.

Because we are in the midst of revising our TQRIS, we will meet the criteria for this section in the following manner: we will 1) present our current understanding of the TQRIS with respect to the RTT-ELC review criteria and our expectation plans for changing the system for Section B(1), 2) address the problems and issues that currently exist, and 3) explain how the TQRIS has addressed this in the contract to FPG, which begins work in November 2013.

(a) Based on tiered programs standards that include–

Early Learning and Development Standards

Current TQRIS

When the state's current TQRIS was launched in 2007, it utilized the state's existing early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers as well as ELD standards for children between the ages of three and five years old. The infant and toddler guidelines were revised in 2009 based on a broad stakeholder involvement from Mississippi's child care centers, technical assistance providers, and our Head Start Collaboratives, and have been maintained by the Office of Head Start in the Office of the Governor. When the state's current TQRIS originated, it also utilized the Mississippi PreKindergarten Curriculum Guidelines for Three and Four-year-old Children. The three-year-old guidelines were developed to help educators and caregivers meet the challenge of providing quality care and educational opportunities for young children in all types of centers, home-based care, and public school pre-kindergarten programs. These guidelines contained components focusing on benchmarks, expectations, assessment guidelines, suggested teaching strategies, and a developmental checklist for the educator or center staff. Similar to the infant and toddler guidelines, the Three- and Four-year-old guidelines were developed through a collaborative statewide effort involving Head Start centers, public and private childcare programs, and federal advocacy and technical assistance providers. The new Early Learning Standards for Three- and Four-year-olds are being used throughout the state but have not been added to the current TQRIS yet.

Issues Requiring Attention in a Revised TQRIS

Two critical issues were identified in Mississippi's ELD standards for the current TQRIS. First, the infant and toddler standards were poorly aligned with the three- and four-year-old standards. This misalignment resulted from the fact that these standards were developed by two different state agencies at two different times. Second, the standards were not significantly informed by existing national research on the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of ELD standards, including areas of social emotional development and gross motor skills.

Additionally, focus group meetings with child care providers indicate suggested changes to how evaluators are trained, policy and procedures as related to appeals process, and the expansion of the technical assistance to support the success of the center. Child care providers stated that the current TQRIS system does not provide enough help to the centers to make the necessary gains.

How These Issues will be Addressed with the Upcoming MS2S

The first issue described above (lack of alignment with national standards) was addressed earlier this year when the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) completed a state-funded effort to align both Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards with nationally benchmarked standards of the national best practices for K-12 education. (See Appendix B for more on the standards.) These standards include the following learning domains:

- English Language Arts (ELA)
- Mathematics
- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Science
- Physical Development
- Creative Expression
- Social Studies

Mississippi is a recognized leader in establishing early learning standards that are consistent with national best practices. The Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Science, Physical Development, Creative Expression and Social Studies Standards were

developed based on National Standards for Early Childhood Education.[43] These standards are grounded in the following four assumptions for improving child outcomes:

1. Young children learn best when they are actively engaged with relevant, meaningful materials
2. Young children learn best through social interaction
3. Young children learn best when their emotional needs are met
4. Young children learn best when their physical development is supported

We are also undergoing the same revision process for our Infant and Toddler Early Learning Guidelines, which are scheduled to be reviewed and revised in 2014 through the use of state funds from the Mississippi Department of Human Services.[44] These revised guidelines will also be aligned to our existing ELD standards and will be added as a required component at all levels of the new MS2S system,[45] with funds applied from this grant to test the fidelity of use of standards for three- and four-year-olds in classrooms.[46] Plans are also in place to create supplemental activity and lesson plan material to complement the standards for early learning educators and parents.[47] The new QRS system will also allow for a substantial amount of incentives, training, and materials for centers addressing the provider's concerns of costs associated with the current system gains.

A Comprehensive Assessment System

State's Current TQRIS

Mississippi's current TQRIS relies heavily on the monitoring of the center and emphasis on ITERS-R and ECERS-R environmental assessments as well as limited parent and staff survey data. Child outcomes are not part of the current TQRIS.

Issues Requiring Attention in a Revised TQRIS

Our current quality rating system's lack of a comprehensive assessment system has been recognized as a major priority for revision. Despite the use of only the environmental rating

---

[43] http://www.naeyc.org/ncate/standards
[44] need footnote on details of the contract or RFA
[45] Supported through subproject 2a
[46] Supported through subproject 2b
[47] Supported through subproject 6d and 7e

scales, we fully understand the need to require student assessments, beyond the current environmental assessments.[48]

How These Will be Addressed with the Upcoming MS2S

The revisions to the new QRS will include child assessments at various points in time as well as training early learning educators on how to use assessments to inform practice.[49] The Mississippi Building Blocks program utilizes several tools of assessment such as Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4), the School Readiness Assessment, and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschool (DECA). Outcomes of participating students have been gathered for 5 years now and will help contribute to the selection of a screening tool and assessment to be utilized within the new system. The Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013, called for the first phase of state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) beginning in 2014-2015.[50] Both the revised TQRIS and the selected KEA are required to align with the state's Three-year-old and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards. (See Appendix B, Request for Proposals - PreK Early Learning Collaborative 2013-2014 Awards)

Early Learning Educator Qualifications

State's Current TQRIS

A tiered rating system currently is structured around a step-based approach for our directors and center staff that involves minimal degrees or certifications as well as professional development hours (with a portion of that time involving the primary content area a staff person is involved with, if applicable). To achieve the highest rating of "Step 5" with respect to the Professional Development criteria, a center's director must have a relevant Bachelor's or Master's degree in a related field as well as at least 25 percent of full-time staff holding a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher. Full-time staff are also required to attend 25 hours of professional development with 10 hours in their area teaching. To achieve a "Step 4" rating, centers require the director to hold an Associate's degree or higher credential and at least 15

---

[48] http://earlylearningtexas.org/media/24062/science-2013-sabol-845-6.pdf
[49] Supported through subproject 6d and 7e
[50] Supported by subproject 12d

percent of full-time teaching staff must have a current CDA or higher. Staff must also have 20 hours of professional development per year.

Issues Requiring Attention in a Revised TQRIS

Two primary concerns exist with the current expectations of our early educator qualifications. First, our "Step 1" centers – those simply registered in the state's current TQRIS – are not required to have any minimal qualifications for either the director or the staff. Second, the tiers of the current TQRIS professional development rating are focused mostly on credentials and professional development credits rather than reaching higher degree levels, which are linked to higher outcomes for students. There are also issues related to how to help providers access these higher education levels and the costs associated.

How These Will be Addressed with the Upcoming MS2S

The revised TQRIS will place greater emphasis on increasing professional development, training and competency among early learning staff; and increasing their qualifications through scholarships and incentives for those working with young children[51]. We will also require the professional development programs to be registered through the Mississippi Department of Education.[52] Much like the K-12 system, professional development needs to be provided through highly trained experts in early childhood education, and offering these through one unit will provide a more consistent form of delivery of the highest quality for early learning educators and will be more cost effective. Through our LifeTracks longitudinal data system, our ability to link child and educator data allows us to evaluate the impact of educators' professional development experiences on child outcomes.[53] The LifeTracks system has performed such analyses for specific professional development programs in the past, based on the data collected by the early educator workforce, unique IDs of children attending registered centers in the TQRIS, and the linkage of these unique IDs with the students' eventual matriculation to elementary school. The impact of linking these students to the longitudinal data system will provide valuable tools for policy implications. The combination of the scholarships and revisions to the system and using longitudinal data to evaluate impact of professional development will encourage higher educational attainment and effective training for our early childhood providers. Using our

---

[51] Supported by subprojects 7a, 9d, and 10d
[52] Supported by subproject 1d, 7g
[53] Supported by subproject 13f

LifeTracks statewide longitudinal data system, we will be able to conduct annual impact studies on both the relationship of specific professional development opportunities and the improvement of child outcomes (see section E(2) for more information).[54]

Family Engagement Strategies

State's Current TQRIS

Family engagement is currently one of the five primary criteria used for assessing the quality of a Mississippi childcare center. To achieve a "Step 2" rating,[55] the center must provide quarterly communications to the parent, hold annual conferences, and use a central communication tool for updating parents on events and other opportunities. A "Step 3" center will provide weekly notes to parents, make training available for parent education, and offer a parental lending library. The "Step 4" centers will include a parent involvement program, offer a formal resource center, and distribute and collect a parent satisfaction survey. Finally, a "Step 5" center incorporates all the "Step 4" requirements within the TQRIS as well as semi-annual conferences and monthly newsletters to parents.

Issues Requiring Attention in a Revised TQRIS

The current parent involvement criteria for the TQRIS provides a minimal baseline for engaging parents in the education of their children. The quality of the various components of the parent involvement criteria vary in terms of effort and impact. For example, some existing "Step 4" centers address the parent resource center requirement with only minimal effort such as a check out library or pamphlet distribution. Other centers, such as in Petal, Mississippi, which had a poverty rate over 15 percent in 2012[56], have established innovative and highly successful initiatives such as the Petal Parenting Center. The Petal community has a shared commitment to children and has been a core piece of the work that has brought them together. For example, community leaders met with school officials from the Petal School District to discuss the achievement gap for African-American children in Petal, with the assumption that schools were not serving children well. With new data, officials and community leaders noticed that African-American children were beginning kindergarten far behind other children. Data, as well as strong

---

[54] Supported by subproject 14g
[55] Like many states, the MCCQSS rating of Step 1 involves licensing the center with the State.
[56] http://www.city-data.com/county/Forrest_County-MS.html

brokers such as the leadership from a community leader and church pastor, changed the dynamic of the conversation and created a true dialogue and brainstorming around what could be done— together—to help children better prepare for school. This dialogue between school officials and community members led to the church pastor opening one of the leading early childhood centers in the community – one that provides high-quality early childhood experiences for young children in the community. By working together to better understand children's needs and the roles and responsibilities of the community in serving children, there is a growing environment within Petal for parents, community leaders, and school officials to help to ensure that all children succeed. This is the family and community engagement framework that will be expanded within the Mississippi plan.

How These Will be Addressed with the Upcoming MS2S

The revisions to the current TQRIS will increase the rigor and quality expected from the family engagement criteria, going beyond just bulletin boards and parent conferences. The technical assistance currently offered to families (with plans to significantly expand in the state[57]) in participating centers will follow that of the Parents as Teachers Model. The national Parents as Teachers (PAT) program began in Missouri in 1981 and continues to offer family support and early education for children birth to five years (Miller, 1995). This model was adopted in Petal, Mississippi, in 1993 and has led to improved results for families in the community. Additionally in Petal, a family resource center for the families and children provides an array of on-site services – many through partnerships with others within the community for children and the adults who care for them - such as the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, the child care resource and referral program, and the center's home visiting program. These combined services offer families meaningful assistance. MBB and Excel by 5 have provided good information as to best practices of reaching families. These ideas will be consistent with national research and added as requirements for the MS2S. We will also plan to expand the current efforts with our existing partnership with the Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM). Based on their extensive outreach and education to parents and communities in traditionally low-income communities,[58] the MCM

---

[57] Supported by subprojects 3b, 6a, 7c, 14d
[58] For more information on the MCM outreach and professional development opportunities offered, visit: http://www.mississippichildrensmuseum.com/education/

will provide additional support in the TQRIS revision to ensure the standards and design align with successful family engagement strategies.[59]

Health Promotion Practices

State's Current TQRIS

Health standards are required for Mississippi Child Care Licensing and meet the 1st step participation in the existing TQRIS, but there are no additional health standards or promotion for health or well-being upper levels of the current TQRIS. Health standards are assessed through the ITERS-R and ECERS-R environmental rating scale, which weighs into the overall rating of a center.

Issues Requiring Attention in a Revised TQRIS

Of immediate and obvious concern was the lack of existing health standards as required to achieve a higher level TQRIS rating. Although the environmental assessments, such as ECERS-R and ITERS -R, address some health standards like hand washing and policies related to health practices, we are fully aware of the importance for including health promotion as a primary criteria for rating our centers in the MS2S.

How These Will be Addressed with the Upcoming MS2S

Due to the recent revision to our Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards, areas of Self-Care, Health, and Safety Skills were added to the standards. We are confident that with the alignment of the health standards within the Early Learning Guidelines, incorporating them within the new QRS will be an easy transition and help align all areas of a successful statewide set of tiered program standards. Health components will also be required with the adoption of the state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment[60] and will include the use of screenings as used in the MBB model.[61]

---

[59] Supported by subproject 3c
[60] Supported by subproject 11a
[61] Supported by subproject 5b

Effective Data Practices

State's Current TQRIS

Because the current TQRIS was developed before any of the current success with our statewide P-20W longitudinal data system, there are no primary criteria that require data collection, use of this information for decision-making, or analyses on center progress. However, our current P-20W statewide longitudinal data system, LifeTracks, has been an effective tool with respect to understanding trends and outcomes within our early learning centers in relation to their TQRIS rating. For example, LifeTracks was able to show that four-year-olds who attended Head Start Centers were over two times more likely to be proficient than a comparison group of children not attending Head Start, once they reached third grade. (See Appendix B and E for more info). The capability for understanding the quality of education received from our early centers is based on our comprehensive statewide longitudinal data system. Incorporating data from the TQRIS registration info will allow for significant understanding of the gains from specific centers and their subsequent quality rating.[62]

Issues Requiring Attention in a Revised TQRIS

The state's LifeTracks data system, our P-20W longitudinal data collection effort, can be fully supportive from the state level down to the center level. Currently, LifeTracks has over 40 MOUs. The foundation for collecting, cleaning, and using these data follows nationally recognized best practices for how LifeTracks combines multiple sources of data from various system within the state.[63]

How These Will be Addressed with the Upcoming MS2S

MS2S centers will receive support in submitting data to the LifeTracks data system.[64] LifeTracks has a long standing relationship with early learning centers in the state and has the ability to collect data from a variety of files and formats, perform automated calculations, and conduct data quality checks and data file validation, the results of which are communicated to centers. LifeTracks currently has the ability to perform such analyses as calculating how many programs moved up or down within the TQRIS or the percentage of CCDF subsidized children

---

[62] Supported by subproject 13a
[63] http://goo.gl/tehtG4
[64] Supported by subproject 5a

who were served in a program participating in the state's current TQRIS during the last fiscal year. However, these analyses are limited to participating centers. At the state level, there exists a LifeTracks governing Board comprised of all participating state agencies that have signed MOUs within this application. Requiring licensed centers to submit data and work with our LifeTracks system – and thus, expansion of the number of centers that can be studied through LifeTracks – will be accomplished through simple adoption of the revisions to the MS2S.[65]

(b) Clear and measurable standards that reflect expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards

The current TQRIS system provides a measurable, differentiated system for rating ELD centers. The standards, as described in Appendix B, demonstrate how centers must provide specific verification to the current assessors for progress measurement. The standards provide a tiered system across five domains of administrative policy, professional development, learning environment, parental involvement, and evaluation. Centers must meet and maintain the standards from the previous levels before advancing to the next tiered rating. In Mississippi, the highest rating is a "Step 5," which represents the highest level of staff training and education, the highest level rating on the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) evaluation, and a comprehensive family engagement approach including elements such as parenting resource centers and ongoing communications and outreach.

With respect to certification of the early learning educators, the current TQRIS requires all directors at centers with the "Step 5" rating to have a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or a higher-degree credential earned through NAEYC-accredited programs through the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education. At least 25 percent of all full-time staff must have a current CDA or higher equivalent. In addition, all staff are required to participate in 25 hours of staff development, with at least 10 of those hours in the area teaching for full-time teaching staff.

The current TQRIS also utilizes nationally recognized ERS for early learning environment observations as well as for evaluating the quality of the education programs in our centers. "Step 3" ratings require an ERS score of at least 3.6 with the "Step 5" centers requiring an ERS score

---

[65] Supported by subproject 13b

of 5.1 or higher. A program can progress to the next rating step after an ERS assessment has been completed and the program has met all the standards for the next tiered rating. The existing TQRIS uses additional forms of documentation for evaluation and feedback purposes, such as parent and staff surveys, annual staff evaluations, self-assessments, and financial impact reports that provide an estimated cost for improving various environmental recommendations for the center.

The revision of the MS2S system[66] will entail greater detail and alignment to the national research and will include:

- Improving professional development[67] and higher education opportunities[68] for program staff and directors linked to a career pathway in the field of early childhood education
- Enhancing compensation that reflects additional education and retention in the field
- Expanding family involvement and understanding of quality early childhood education in ways that are inclusive and respectful of the diversity of families and children with special needs[69]
- Evaluation of programs meeting evidence-based conditions for quality and promoting programs' continuous improvement to encourage achievement of higher tiers[70]

(c) Is linked to the state licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs

All licensing for child care centers is operated through the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), a participating state agency with a signed MOU for this application. Funding for licensure is provided through the Mississippi Department of Human Services, which establishes an ongoing fiscal and policy relationship between the state office that regulates licensing and the state office that oversees the current QRIS.

Mississippi's licensing system and standards provide a baseline of quality for the current TQRIS. The state's current TQRIS is linked to the state licensing system by including all licensed programs in the existing TQRIS at a "Step 1" rating. Licensing standards for operating a child

---

[66] Supported by subproject 5b
[67] Supported by subprojects 7a, 7b, 7d, 7e, and 9d
[68] Supported by subprojects 10c and 10d
[69] Supported by subprojects 3c, 14b, 14d, and 14f
[70] Supported by subprojects 5d, 13b, and 14g

care center align with the standards for current TQRIS by requiring directors to have a bachelor's degree or higher in a related field. The licensing standard allows a director to have a two-year Associates degree or CDA credential provided the individual also has an additional two years of paid experience in a licensed child care facility. MSDH also regulates the need for environmental factors such as safety and health for the centers. In Mississippi, the baseline for all TQRIS ratings is licensing and compliance through state regulation. There are exceptions allowed for receiving a license for child care centers, and these exemptions typically follow other state practices, such as the number of children that are not related, as well as allowances for time (e.g., locations that operate less than three weeks per year). Of the providers that participate in the CCPS subsidy plan (as of 2013, there are 1,534), 77 percent are licensed through the Mississippi State Department of Health.

Once the revisions to the state's TQRIS have been completed,[71] MSDH will agree to consider alignment between licensing and the Step rating for our early learning centers.[72] This is scheduled to begin in early 2014, and will involve the following action steps:

- The MS2S encourage better staff-to-child ratios as well as group sizes – a requirement that is not currently included in the MSDH licensing regulations
- The current TQRIS has a minimum threshold on the early learning environmental rating scales, whereas the MSDH licensing requirements have less rigorous and specific classroom and outdoor activity suggestions. Our plan is to increase the number of licensing monitors to ease the caseload to match national standards. Additionally, the licensing monitors will use a data system that will give full access of environmental rating scale scores. MSDH will help deliver the reports and explain initial results to center Directors. This will create a greater degree of alignment and coordination for our centers so that they are interacting with the same state official for licensing and evaluation, which will improve the feedback and assistance provided.
- Current curriculum requirements under the current TQRIS are being revised to include activities and lesson plans; however, these will be included within the licensing regulations as a means of suggested activities for all licensed centers.

---

[71] Supported by subproject 5b
[72] Supported by subprojects 5c

- Existing TQRIS standards require that programs implement annual assessment and screening and report twice annually to parents; however, the current licensure requirements do not address parental involvement order interaction. MDH is committed to helping revise some licensing standards as they relate to reporting to parents and providing updates on child assessments.

- Besides the minimum credentials addressed above for operating a child care center, the revised licensing standards will follow the current TQRIS standards that outlined requirements for training hours of all full-time staff and directors. These professional development opportunities will be regulated through the Mississippi Department of Education.[73]

Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State							
	Program Standards Elements[74] If the Program Standards address the element, p*lace an "X"* in that box						
List each set of existing Program Standards currently used in the State; specify which programs in the State use the standards	Early Learning and Development Standards	Comprehensive Assessment Systems	Qualified workforce	Family engage-ment	Health promotion	Effective data practices	Other
Child Care Center Rules and Regulations	X	X	X	X	X	X	N/A
In-Home Provider Care Rules and Regulations	X	X	X	X	X	X	N/A
Pre-K Guidelines for schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	N/A

---

[73] Supported by subproject 1d

[74] Please refer to the definition of Program Standards for more information on the elements.

Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State							
	Program Standards Elements[74] _If the Program Standards address the element, place an "X" in that box_						
List each set of existing Program Standards currently used in the State; specify which programs in the State use the standards	Early Learning and Develop-ment Standards	Comprehensive Assessment Systems	Qualified workforce	Family engage-ment	Health promotion	Effective data practices	Other
and Title 1 Programs							
Head Start and Early Head Start	X	X	X	X	X	X	N/A
[Add additional rows as needed and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]							

B(2) Promoting participation in the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Mississippi has a strong plan to maximize provider participation in the current TQRIS and, subsequently, the new revised rating system, MS2S, which will be completed in early 2014.[75] To date, the current TQRIS has been voluntary for all early child development centers. Recent state efforts have sought to improve the professional development offered to centers participating in the TQRIS, and currently, an increase of 15 percent since 2011. Following MS2S implementation, participation in the newly revised rating system will be increased through technical assistance incentives[76] as well as the continuing reimbursement from Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS). With the Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) program holding a yearly waiting list for participation, additional funds will allow us to help more centers, thus enrolling more centers in the MS2S.[77] A strong commitment to this proposal idea can be found in the child care centers letters of support. They are ready to engage in the process and are looking forward to the new partnerships to help improve the system. Again, this promotion effort will be based on a comprehensive incentive plan that has been demonstrated to improve quality care through programs such as MBB as well as the Head Start collaborative model.

These programs, which encompass a large number of child care programs in the state, have been actively participating in the feedback loops for the current TQRIS and have been piloting many of the proposed initiatives in this application - initiatives geared towards improving the quality of the early learning environment and community engagement that are designed to understand the relationship with improving child outcomes. Figure 1 reflects MBB pre and post test data indicating a gain in quality classroom as measured by the ECERS-R in 200 classrooms during year 3 of the project.

---

[75] Supported by subproject 5b
[76] Supported by subprojects 6a, 6f, and 7d
[77] Supported by subprojects 6b, 6d, and 6e

MISSISSIPPI

The results of the pilot studies within Mississippi provide clear evidence that the new QRIS will raise quality of classrooms as well as student outcomes. The new MS2S will allow for the addition of best practices in the following areas:

- Supportive environment for professional development of early learning educators and caregivers[78]

- Increased focus on family engagement and community partnership[79]

- Integration of the state's Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards[80]

- High-quality interactions between the early learning educators and children[81]

- Incorporation of multiple screening assessments and observation tools[82]

The following policies and practices are components of the "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform to reach full participation from all publicly-funded ELD programs in the MS2S.

State-funded Preschool Centers through Collaborations

With the recent passage of Mississippi state law for publicly-funded pre-kindergarten programs through Collaborations, communities and districts will be able to establish these programs through engagement with a collaborative, which will be comprised, at a minimum, of a public school district and/or a local Head Start affiliate (if it is in existence), private or parochial schools, or one or more licensed child care centers. These collaborations establishing the preK programs will be funded through the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). All participating childcare centers under this initiative must meet the state child care facility licensure requirements and utilize a nationally recognized assessment tool that has been approved by the MDE.[83]

---

[78] Supported by subprojects 7a and 7e
[79] Supported by subprojects 7c and 14f
[80] Supported by subproject 5b
[81] Supported by subprojects 10a and 10d
[82] Supported by subproject 14c
[83] Supported by subproject 11a

Early Head Start and Head Start Programs

Approximately 80 percent of Head Start and Early Head Start programs are currently licensed centers, and almost 30 percent of these centers currently participate in the state's voluntary TQRIS system for licensed centers. The State Head Start Association and all Head Start and Early Head Start Programs are supportive of the revision to the current TQRIS and upon completion of the MS2S will fully encourage all Head Start centers to participate through a combination of incentives as well as technical assistance programs that have demonstrated impressive participation with involvement.[84] We also plan to launch several "center-led" cohorts, developing various communities of practice within the state, where a model early learning center will receive annual funds to provide support, coaching, resources, and other assistance to early learning centers that are located relatively close to the "model center." Based on research on technical assistance, we understand the potential for tapping into a community-based approach, allowing centers to understand some of the unique challenges faced with a specific region or population, and the positive impact this can have on the teaching and guiding of other centers. Head Start will become the first recipients of these grants and will provide a plan for how other communities of practice can be initiated and sustained.[85]

Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of Part B of IDEA and Part C of IDEA, and Title I of ESEA

ELD programs operated by local school districts, including those funded through either IDEA Parts B and C funds or Title I funds, will be covered by the preK program requirements of the revised MS2S. The staff with the Mississippi Department of Education will work closely with the school districts that currently provide preK services. With the newly formed partnership within the Mississippi Department of Education, the state expects to engage all districts serving preK students to participate in the new MS2S. As a result, students enrolled in programs funded under IDEA and Title I will be receiving the highest quality care.

---

[84] Supported by subproject 7a
[85] Supported by subproject 7d

Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the state's CCDF program

Approximately 10,000 licensed child care centers in the state receive funds from the state's CCDF program. Additionally, there are approximately 2,900 ELD programs run by in-home providers that work with children subsidized by the State's CCDF program. The Division of Early Childhood Care and Development will encourage each of these in-home providers to participate in the In-Home Provider component of the TQRIS. Fifty in-home providers have participated in the first phase of implementation for this system in 2012. The goals for the In-Home Initiative is to expand their capacity to reach between 500 and 600 additional homes per year and to have approximately 90 percent of these in-home providers enrolled by the end of 2015.[86]

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs

Mississippi has made great strides in education reform in the 2013 legislative session. The leadership of both the House, Senate, and Governor indicate full support for improvements to preK-12 students. The historical education reform act passed this year titled Education Works Program and the Literacy-Based Promotion Act includes:

- Scholarships for students with high GPA and ACT to enter the field of education
- Performance Based Compensation for early learning educators
- Higher standards for teacher prep programs
- Charter School Act
- Directing $6 million to Teach for America
- Directing $3 million to continue early childhood education efforts conducted by Mississippi Building Blocks
- Directing $1.8 million to LifeTracks, a data system that provides statistics on student achievement
- Directing $300,000 to training for Dyslexia professionals
- Directing $22.6 million to the National Board Certification program

---

[86] Supported by subprojects 6e, 14f, and 14h

- Directing $250,000 to help high school students obtain work certifications
- Directing $1 million to dropout prevention and intervention efforts conducted by Jobs for Mississippi

The passing of SB 2395 is significant as it will phase in a collaborative grant model to form local partnerships to operate preschool programs. The state Department of Education is receiving proposals from those interested in operating pre-kindergarten programs and will award communities with the strongest application / plan the state-appropriated funds to serve these students. Funding of the preK bill in combination with the appropriation of funds for the MBB program indicate significant growth in the focus on young children in Mississippi. Helping High Needs Children obtain high quality child care is a top policy priority for Governor Bryant and the legislative leadership.

Subsidy Policy and Improving Participation Rate for Low Income Families

Mississippi's reimbursement rates in the CCDF child care subsidy program are set to balance affordability for parents by use of a sliding fee scale and revenue needs of providers by use of an enhanced rate structure in the current TQRIS. No fees are charged to clients in approved TANF work settings. Families in transition from welfare to work and families referred through the DHS Dept. of Family and Children Services child welfare and child protection services are only charged a $10 per month co-payment fee. A goal of this application will be to expand the financial incentives in the quality rating system to further increase revenue for providers to meet quality improvement requirements without increasing fees charged to parents.[87] These additional financial incentives include mentoring and materials to help improve learning environments and scholarships to teaching staff coupled with wage stipends for staff who attain higher levels of education.[88]

Mississippi uses the federally set eligibility limit of 85 percent of state median income, which makes a significant portion of Mississippi families eligible for subsidy, Mississippi has established priority populations to identify sectors within the large number of eligible families who will be given priority for service.[89] Those priorities include low income families, special

---

[87] Supported by subproject 6d
[88] Supported by subproject 9d
[89] See SB 2395 for more information on priority given to children from low income families:
http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2013/pdf/SB/2300-2399/SB2395PS.pdf

needs families, and parents transitioning from welfare to work. In response to the increased unemployment experienced in Mississippi as a result of the economic downturn, Mississippi extended the period a parent could remain eligible for child care while searching for work to 60 days. In addition, last year Mississippi extended the re-determination period from six months to one year to reduce interruptions in service for parents. Mississippi plans to reverse two current eligibility policies that have proven to deter parents from applying and cause disruptions in service: the requirement that single parents initiate a child support case and the requirement that full-time students re-apply every semester. These changes in eligibility policy will significantly improve the delivery of child care services for eligible families.[90]

The current TQRIS system is tied to a tiered reimbursement system. Participating licensed child care facilities can earn quality ratings of One, Two, Three, Four and Five Stars. Facilities that earn higher ratings and serve families eligible for the Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program can receive quality bonus money from the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development, which administers the Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program. The new MS2S will provide significant revisions and improvements and will include substantially more incentives and technical assistance for participation.[91] The linking of the higher standards with more assistance will yield higher involvement and engagement from child care providers.

Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB), now in its 5th year of service to early childhood programs, educators, and directors, continues its work to improve children's school readiness. MBB is currently providing comprehensive mentoring to 400 classrooms located across the state. In addition, MBB provides business training for directors, classroom materials, and scholarships for early learning educators. MBB's reports show that the program has a positive impact on both cognitive skills and social-emotional development of children participating in the program as compared to the control group. Of particular interest is the finding that MBB appears to be most effective with children of greatest need. That is, children who are below 185 percent of poverty

---

[90] Supported by subproject 14i
[91] Supported by subprojects 6d, 7a, and 7e

and live in single parent households have made the greatest gains on the School Readiness and Social/Emotional Assessments.

ECERS-R Subsection Means at Pretest and Posttest were significantly improved as a result of MBB intervention. Figure 1 as follows:
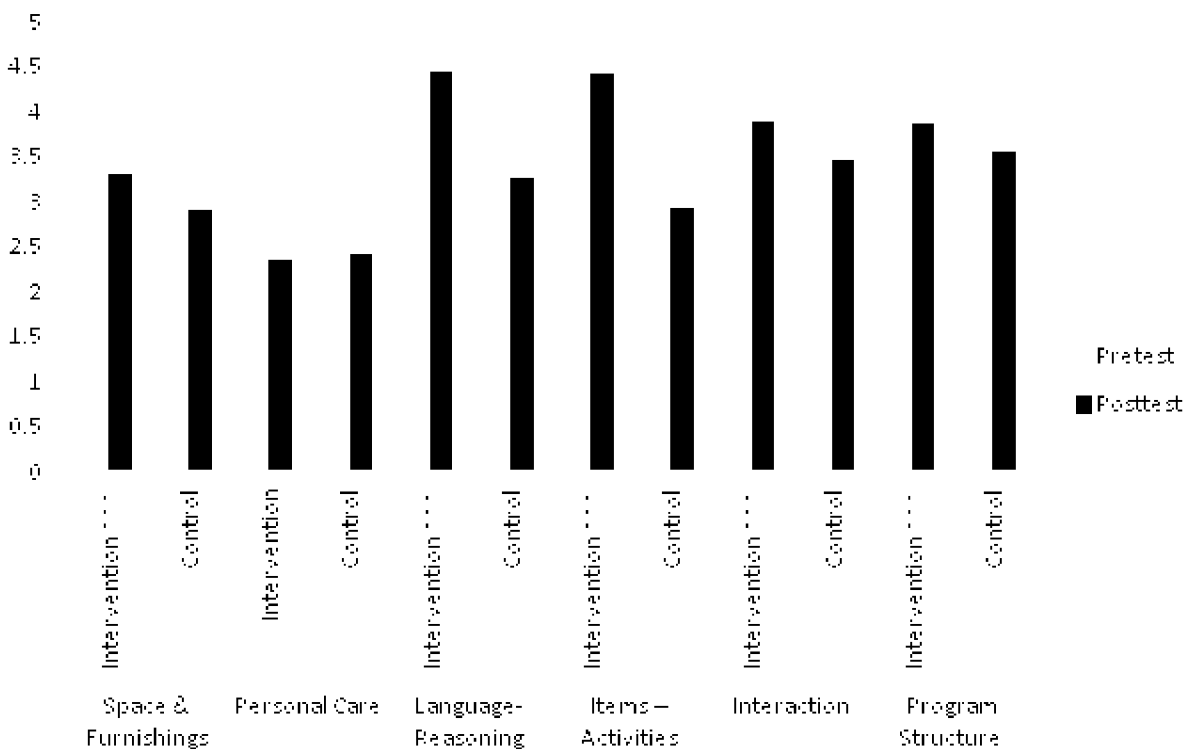
The MBB model provides a successful incentive for allowing families of low income to receive high quality child care, based on the number of supports and incentives provided to these centers and classrooms. With the revision of the state's current TQRIS in 2014[92] to support the expansion of the "MBB model," we are excited about the potential to use grant funds to expand this model to several High Needs areas.[93]

---

[92] Supported by subproject 5b
[93] Supported by subprojects 10d, 14d, and 14f

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in B(2)(a)(1) through (5) above)

In addition to the efforts described previously, we also plan to launch additional initiatives to focus on privately funded early learning centers. Based on the significant role of our early learning centers connected to churches and other religious organizations, we plan to conduct direct outreach through engaging local clergy and early learning directors. These meetings and outreach will advertise the many benefits for participating within the TQRIS, based on the support for directors and professional development opportunities for their staff, as well as the larger community of practice they can participate.[94] Additionally, we will rely on our increase in the number of licensing monitors who conduct regular visits to private centers around the state, and tap into this relationship for communicating the benefits of participating the state's new effort for the TQRIS.[95] Based on limited past efforts for clergy outreach and private center engagement through the licensing relationship, we are confident that even the minimal increase in funding for travel and staff time will yield positive benefits for increasing the number of private centers who are excited to be a part of the larger early learning community in Mississippi.

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	**Number of programs in the State**	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		**Target-end of calendar year 2014**		**Target - end of calendar year 2015**		**Target-end of calendar year 2016**		**Target- end of calendar year 2017**	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool Specify: Mississippi Department of Education public school PreK programs.	56	0	0	5	9	10	18	20	36	40	71

---

[94] Supported by subproject 6e
[95] Supported by subprojects 5c and 6f

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target - end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Early Head Start and Head Start[96]	280	75	27	150	54	165	59	182	63	200	71
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (Child Care Centers, Head Start and Early HS)	9	3	33	4	44	5	56	6	67	7	78
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C*	168	6	3.6	6	3.6	6	3.6	6	3.6	6	3.6
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	95	0	0	5	5	10	10	14	15	19	20
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA*	56	0	0	3	5	6	10	8	15	11	20
Programs receiving from CCDF funds	1,939	364	19	485	25	679	35	873	45	1,163	60
Other: Describe: Licensed Childcare Centers (MS Department of Health, 2013)	1,612	522	32	616	38	700	43	784	49	868	54

Baseline data are actual numbers from administrative records of the MS Department of Education, MS Head Start Association, MS Department of Human Services, and MS Department of Health.

*Due to Part C requirements of serving children in their natural environment, the rate of TQRIS participation is expected to stay consistent.

---

[96] Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

B(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency

Mississippi recognizes the need for a Quality Ratings system that is robust, rigorous, reliable and valid. Our plan is to utilize and improve the rating tools available in the field today. The details of this plan are described in the following segments.

There are presently two experienced organizations that rate and monitor Early Learning Development Programs in Mississippi: 1. the Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University, which conducts the current TQRIS rating and monitoring services for learning and development programs and licensed child care facilities; and 2. the Extension Service housed at Mississippi State University, which rates and monitors early care in-home providers. Additionally, Mississippi Head Start Centers utilize the CLASS measure as a tool for evaluating and improving the quality of early childhood education.

The Early Childhood Institute (ECI)

ECI developed Quality Stars, called Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System, as Mississippi's tiered Quality Rating and Improvement system (TQRIS). ECI, through a grant it receives on behalf of the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Early Childhood Education and Development (DECCD), administers the current TQRIS Program. Participation is voluntary for licensed child care centers. They can earn quality ratings of One, Two, Three, Four, and Five Stars. All licensed child care facilities in the state are eligible for participation in this program. The more stars a facility has earned, the higher the quality of care that is provided. The rating process typically takes 6-9 months to complete. A summary of the current process licensed centers take in their evaluation or their monitoring visit is listed below. See Appendix B for a copy of manuals and criteria.

State's Current TQRIS Program

The Quality Stars manuals include complete lists of the required criteria for child care and preK programs participating in Mississippi's quality rating and improvement system. Criteria that establish quality for a center's star rating are:

1. Program Administration
2. Learning Environments
3. Professional Development
4. Evaluation
5. Parent Involvement

Participating centers use these assessment tools for evaluation of mastering these criteria: a) Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised (ITERS-R), which is designed to assess group programs for children from birth to 2 ½ years of age and consists of 39 items, also available in Spanish; and b) the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised (ECERS-R), which is designed to assess group programs for children from 2 through 5 years of age and consists of 43 items, also available in Spanish. These measures are internationally used, research-based, valid, and reliable assessment tools.

Several steps are involved in the evaluation and monitoring of a licensed child care facility. These steps must occur before a Quality Step monitor visits a facility:

- Evaluation of director's skills, using a self-assessment form or online assessment
- Evaluation of early learning educator's knowledge
- Registration for professional development activities (training). (Note: All training must be completed by trainers approved by the Child Care Licensure Bureau of the Mississippi Department of Health.)
- Planning of a Quality Step System monitoring after all staff completion of minimum required training hours

A summary of the current process licensed centers take in their preparation or their monitoring visit is listed here:

- recruitment notices mailed to all licensed early care and early childhood programs; these contain information on regional information/sign-up meeting

- program director of a center attends enrollment/information meeting and receives planning book
- program enrolls and sets the rating step they are attempting to obtain
- program receives instructions on a set of online forms to collect information for their rating
- using center's observation window, rating specialists conduct observation of classrooms using ECERS-R or ITERS-R measurement tools
- reports are submitted to the Division of Early Childhood Care and Development
- letter by DECCD sent to center's director informing them of the rating they received
- if center receives a 2-star or higher rating, incentives are provided based on the number of children who receive subsidy certificates
- Every 6 months following a rating of 2 or higher, an unannounced TQRIS visit occurs to determine continued level of quality is present. If the initial awarded rating is not maintained, rating is adjusted, DECCD is notified, and bonus payments adjusted accordingly
- programs re-enroll on an annual basis and may request a TQRIS monitoring for obtainment of a higher star rating

See Appendix B for the requirements for earning One, Two, Three, Four, and Five Quality Stars.

The MSU Extension Service and Nurturing Homes Initiative

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Early Childhood Education and Development (DECCD) also funds the Nurturing Homes Initiative (NHI), operated by the Mississippi State University Extension Service. It provides educational training and technical assistance to unlicensed in-home and family day care childcare providers that offer full-day, full-year child care services to eligible families. This started in 2001 as a pilot project, with participation from 60 family home-care providers. The data were statistically significant in each of the subscales of the Family Day Care Rating Scale (now revised to the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale). The project is being replicated and expanded throughout the state and continues to be successful.

NHI's assessment instrument for early childhood and child care program quality in family child care programs is the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R). Total scale consists of 38 items and is also available in Spanish. The In-Home certification requires the following from in-home or family child care settings:

- Staff members to be at least 18 years of age
- Are willing and able to complete the training required of in-home childcare providers
- Are willing to agree in writing to the requirements for in-home childcare providers
- Have auto insurance on file

Utilizing assessment tools, NHI field staff can verify and evaluate that the following conditions are met:

- Space availability of each in-home setting, adequate for children to play, rest and eat comfortably
- Requirements regarding such items as child guidance, child discipline, food service, nutrition, television viewing, etc. are met
- Individuals providing in-home child care have completed at least one module per month or no fewer than 15 modules in 18 months of the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)
- Fire safety inspection of the home (this is conducted by the fire department at the time of initial, annual certification, or re-certification)
- Interview with applicant in the home with all family members present
- Pre-assessment at the application stage
- Following a six-month period, conduction of a mid-point assessment, using FCCERS-R instrument and a score of 3.0; if this score is not met, additional technical assistance is offered through the MSCCR&R Network to increase score to a minimum 3.0
- At the end of 12 months, conduction of post-assessment; if minimal score is not met, in-home settings become inactive and do not receive the NHI certification
- Post certification, approving providers are visited after a six month probationary period and annually thereafter
- Post certification, informal assessment annually
- Completion of in-home inspection checklist after each inspection; in case of non-compliance or deficiencies, conduction of repeated home visits until correction of those is

taking place; repetition of the same deficiencies following a third inspection results in a recommendation for retraining, probation, or revocation

Process for Maintaining Inter-rater Reliability Using the Environment Rating Scales

Inter-rater reliability in the TQRIS process has been paramount in the development of the entire system. Mississippi has a pool of extremely well-trained staff that lead to TQRIS program quality and monitoring. Retraining to lead staff members occurs at least every 18 months. This achieves familiarity with revisions in using the scale and reliability with more experienced evaluators. The level of reliability for each evaluator falls to 85 percent; anything below that level signals removal from classroom evaluations until the minimal level of reliability is achieved.

Training of New Environment Evaluator Staff

A combination of direct instruction and in-field practice evaluations is used to train TQRIS evaluators. Following the completion of formal training, evaluators must establish inter-rater reliability of 85 percent with a supervisor on three concurrent evaluations before they can conduct independent evaluations.

In addition to the programs discussed previously, Mississippi implements the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for measuring and improving interactions in Early Childhood Education. This measurement tool is currently used in Mississippi Head Start Centers and will be scaled up to support centers and classrooms that receive additional support from this grant.[97] It focuses on how early learning educators use the physical environment, available materials, or specific curriculum in their interactions with children. The CLASS is organized to access three broad domains of interactions between early learning educators and children:

- Emotional support
- Classroom organization
- Instructional support

Within each of these domains, interactions are further organized into multiple dimensions, such as, for example, positive climate (classroom relationships that promote children's enjoyment) and concept development (teacher-child interactions that promote higher-order thinking and

---

[97] Supported by subprojects 2a, 5a, and 5d

cognition). Resources for Head Start Centers include items from subscription to video library and CLASS discussion toolkits to training for CLASS room interactions and intensive coaching programs using the CLASS tool.

Process for Maintaining Inter-rater Reliability Using the CLASS Scales

Becoming a certified CLASS observer requires attending a two-day Observation Training provided by a certified CLASS trainer and passing a reliability test. The reliability test consists of watching and coding five 15-minute classroom video segments online. To pass, trainees need to score within 1 point of the master code on 80 percent of all codes given and demonstrate the ability to code reliably across all ten CLASS dimensions. When trainees are not reliable after the first try, they are provided with feedback and additional testing opportunities.

Training of New CLASS Observers

Classrooms are observed by trained and certified CLASS observers. Basic training consists of two days in which participants are introduced to each of the CLASS dimensions and then practice scoring videotaped segments. Detailed feedback about trainee observer's performance is given, as well as discussions with other trainees. Trainings are conducted by certified CLASS Trainers, with extensive training on best supporting practices for new observers.

As part of Mississippi's commitment to continuously improve the quality rating system in early learning and development programs, the state proposes to expand the current tools used in licensed early care and in-home settings. The proposed changes focus on the Environmental Rating Scales (ITERS-R, ECERS-R, and FCCERS-R) because these are widely implemented by most early childhood day care and family facilities across the state.[98]

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are written in plain language, and are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs

---

[98] Supported by subproject 5c

Currently, licensing information provided to families only details whether or not a center is licensed. Information such as temporary or probationary licensure is not available. However, due to recent CCDF modifications, that information will soon become available to parents who receive child care subsidies. It will require collaboration among MDHS and MSDH as well as development and implementation of a new data system. Parents can search for licensed child care centers on both the MDHS and MSDH websites. A toll free number and email are provided on the MDHS website to assist parents with any questions.

The Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MSCCR&R) offered through the Mississippi State University Extension Service supports early care and education professionals, parents, children, and community members seeking information about quality child care. The MSCCR&R has 15 Resource & Referral (R&R) sites, most of which are located on community college campuses. In addition to the local sites, there is one recreational vehicle equipped with resources and materials that travels around the state. The MSCCR&R maintains a database of information about all licensed childcare centers to help families locate childcare providers in their area based on each family's needs and interests. A referral for available local child care can be requested by contacting a local R&R site via email or telephone.

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) Division of Early Childhood Care and Development provides quality rating information to parents through a variety of sources. Their website provides quality information through the use of program descriptions, online brochures, and a search tool that allows parents to find child care providers in their area. The brochures, A Parent's Guide to Choosing Quality Care, provide information for newborns to two years and children three to five years and inform the parents of key elements to look for when choosing a provider. These elements include love and care; room and space; safety; trained staff; healthy food; and learning. An online search tool allows a parent to search by provider name, provider type, city, county, or star rating. The screenshot below shows one example of how this tool works. These data are updated daily as part of the Child Care Payment System. Through additional support from this grant, Mississippi can improve the alignment of the licensure data

with the centers participating in the TQRIS, in order to provide parents a more comprehensive understanding of the quality care their children would receive.[99]

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) provides a similar online tool that allows parents to search for licensed child care facilities. A parent can perform a general search by county or an advanced search that allows parent to search by facility name, city, or county. Both results return a facility name, address, phone number, and capacity. These data are updated data as part of licensure regulations.

MDHS DECCD sponsored an advertisement campaign two years ago that is still ongoing today that reaches out to parents through the following: website, television commercials, billboards, radio spots, push cards, and brochures. It also has a booth at several events, trainings, and conferences where brochures and push cards are disseminated. This information has been disseminated through local resource and referrals, pediatrician's offices, local health departments, and county offices.

In 2010, DECCD gave the MSDH Child Care Licensing Unit extra funding to build a system for their staff to enter information about licensed centers. MSDH went through the RFP process and internal decision to utilize Mississippi's Information Technology Services (ITS) to design and build the system. ITS has a frame work for a licensure design built for another part of the MSDH. ITS also built the CCDF certificate eligibility and maintenance system. Through utilization of the licensure framework and the CCDF eligibility system, ITS will have two strong components to build the system with the minimal funding allocated. The licensed center database will feed the licensure unit and the certificate eligibility unit the same information, and data will be available for each unit's system for the most up-to-date information for each center. A screenshot below shows a sample of the current information provided to parents; however, MSDH will be provided funds to make upgrades to this site, as well as link this information (and the parent traffic) to the proposed one-stop shop for parents on early learning centers.[100]

---

[99] Supported by subproject 5c
[100] Supported by subproject 5c

Building upon Mississippi's dedication to providing information to parents about quality child care, we will use the following dissemination practices:

- Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program: Approximately 18,000 low-income, high-needs children at any given time are receiving assistance through subsidies provided by this program. Parents have the option to choose any pre-approved CCPS provider whether that provider is licensed or unlicensed. In an effort to increase parent's knowledge of high-quality care and promote centers that are part of the TQRIS, materials will be provided to all parents participating in the subsidy programs that includes general information about Quality Stars and a map that highlights rated centers within their area with particular attention given to high-quality centers. Parents may request further information based upon contact details given on the map.[101]

---

[101] Supported by subprojects 5a, 6a, and 14g

- Mississippi Children's Museum: the state's premier children's museum provides direct outreach to children, parents, and educator professionals across the state. The Museum was designed not just as a visiting location, but also with direct engagement and outreach into the communities.

- Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an internationally recognized home visiting program to help organizations work with parents to promote children's health, safety, and education. The program emphasizes customization of services to meet individual child and family needs. Through the use of RTT-ELC funds, the PAT model will be adopted to educate families/communities on the guidelines and systems. Funds will be used for developing resources, support for implementing the parenting Center model, child care for parents during these sessions, transportation as needed, and other services.

- Licensure: Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) provides assistance to parents looking for licensed child care facilities through the use of an online search tool. We will add the quality rating of the center to each center to promote high quality access to parents.[102]

- Marketing: Current TQRIS participants receive a certificate when they achieve a star rating. In addition to the certificate, we propose to provide marketing materials to programs that include banners, posters, and a media kit. The media kit will include sample letters programs can use to inform parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders, as well as sample press releases and graphics of the Quality Stars logo to be used for promotion practices.[103]

B(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs

Since the inception of the current TQRIS, Mississippi has a long track record of providing coaching, technical assistance, and incentives to child care centers to enhance early learning. When the state's existing TQRIS was developed, it contemplated those three characteristics in its design. For centers that served children who come from economic distress as evidenced by the need to pay for child care through the state's certificate program, centers would receive a bonus

---

[102] Supported by subproject 5c
[103] Supported by subproject 6a, 6d, and 7b

payment of increasing amounts for each level of quality "Star" attained. The bonus payments served as an incentive for centers to participate and to market to families in with High Needs.

Moving forward, the lessons learned from the implementation of Mississippi Building Blocks and other quality enhancement projects will serve as the foundation for the types of support and incentives for the whole early learning system to improve. The types of support can be broken down into four categories: coaching / technical assistance, incentives, subsidy reimbursement, and teacher compensation.

From the coaching and technical assistance perspective, the state will scale up a team of coaches and TA providers to improve the quality of instruction given in child care centers across the state. Coaches will work with early learning educators to implement best practices in child development that will position the centers to progress along the Quality Rating System continuum. Directors will receive consulting as well to make business improvements. By streamlining the business management aspects of the centers, center directors will have more time to coach and train classroom early learning educators.[104]

Each center will also receive classroom materials to jumpstart the quality improvement process. The challenges are particularly acute in the centers that solely provide care to children that pay for care through the child care certificate program. In Mississippi, where resources are scarce, the child care subsidy levels have been set to reimburse providers at roughly 50-60 percent of the market rate to create as many slots as possible. One negative externality of that policy is that centers that serve High Needs Children are often unable to accumulate the funds from the cash flow to make the purchases and facility improvements needed to earn higher stars and bonus payments. This phenomenon is one of the primary reasons that participation in the current TQRIS program has not been higher to date. The funds will serve both as an incentive to get more centers into the program and as an incentive for centers to stay in the program to receive the TA and coaching needed to deliver higher quality care than is currently delivered.[105] We anticipate that we will keep in place the bonus payment structure to incentivize providers to continuously make quality improvements.

---

[104] Supported by subprojects 7a, 7b, and 7d
[105] Supported by subprojects 7a, 7b, and 7d

On the early learning educators front, a number of initiatives within the state of Mississippi have made investments in the human capital development of childcare early learning educators. Not surprisingly, as early learning educators have acquired credentials, they have been able to move into more gainful employment – typically in the local school system. Research from North Carolina has documented that the turnover of early learning educators – particularly those with higher levels of education – has a negative effect on child outcomes.

To address turnover and the negative outcomes associated with it, Mississippi will implement the successful WAGE$ program, similar to states as North Carolina or Florida.[106] Specifically, center directors will have access to funds to support the professional development of their teams. Early learning educators will have access to acquire the additional education needed to create and offer a high quality learning environment for children. The scholarship program will be open to early learning educators in centers where at least a third of the children are paying for childcare through the certificate program. After successfully completing the training, the early learning educators will receive a salary supplement every six months. As early learning educators acquire higher levels of training, they will earn higher supplements. A salary study will be conducted early on within the grant period to establish income guidelines for participation in the program. Early learning educators earning below established income caps will be eligible to participate in the program.

(b) *Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services)*

Since almost 60 percent of children in Mississippi are from low-income families, there is a critical need for families to have access to high-quality ELDPs. However, many communities in Mississippi lack the resources to meet that need. Several programs in the state include parent engagement as a component of their mission and goals. These programs include the Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program, Head Start, Mississippi Child Care Resource & Referral Network, Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) , and Excel by 5.

---

[106] Supported by subproject 9d

Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program

The Mississippi Child Care Certificate Program is designed to provide parents with assistance with child care tuition. To be eligible, a child must be under the age of 13 or under age 19 and physically or mentally unable of caring for her/himself. Parent eligibility is based on income and the following priority groups:

PRIORITY	GROUP	DESCRIPTION
I	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Eligibility is determined by MDHS, Division of Economic Assistance, Parent must be currently participating in an allowable TANF program activity and must comply with all program requirements.
II	Transitional Child Care (TCC)	Eligibility is based on a referral from TANF caseworker. TCC is available for 2 years after transitioning from TANF.
III	Very Low-Income, At Risk of Going on TANF	In order to qualify for full-time child care, the parent must be working at least twenty-five (25) hours per week, or be enrolled full-time in an approved educational program. Documentation must be provided on a case by case basis. In a two-parent family, each parent must be working at least twenty-five (25) hours per week, and/or enrolled in school full time. The family's gross income must be at 50 percent or below the state Median Income. Children in Protective Services are eligible for child care services without regard to income. Foster parent(s) and Protective Services parent(s) are served at the request of their social worker.
IV	Low-Income, At Risk of Going on TANF	Based upon the availability of funding, children of parent(s) in an approved full-time educational or training program and/or working the required 25 hours per week whose income falls between 50 and 85 percent of the SMI.

Mississippi Head Start/Early Head Start

The Mississippi Head Start Association, as well as individual Head Start/Early Head Start (Head Start) agencies in the state, encourage supporting families through the provision of resources and training. Head Start provides full-day child care services to an average of 27,000 children per year. These services include two meals to the children daily. Transportation is also provided through the use of buses to get children to and from the centers.

Head Start strives to build strong relationships with families. Their family support services include parent workshops and training, in-home visits, student worksheets, and programs that encourage paternal participation.[107]

---

[107] Supported by subproject 7d

Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network

The Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MSCCR&R) provides support to working families by referring them to local child care providers. MSCCR&R maintains a database of information on licensed child care centers to help families locate childcare providers in their area based on each family's needs and interests. A referral can be requested at local R&R sites, through email, or via telephone. With the improved alignment of the licensing effort to the TQRIS, we are excited about the potential for these two traditionally separate efforts to unite and support the aggressive effort to improve quality of early learning centers.[108]

Mississippi Building Blocks

Mississippi Building Blocks includes Family Engagement as one of its five goals to support children in school readiness. Parent advocates provide education services to families, focusing on children's growth and development as well as families' involvement in their children's education. As mentioned previously in this section, the model used within Mississippi Building Blocks program will be significantly scaled to provide the same types of services for classrooms and centers that serve Children with High Needs in all parts of the state.[109]

Excel by 5

Excel by 5 is a community-based certification designed to improve a child's overall well-being by age five. The first of its kind in the United States, this program emphasizes the important roles communities play in educating their children during their most formative years–birth to five. Excel by 5 provides family support services through parent training in the following areas: language, rules, recognition, day care/early education, and home environment. Through multiple efforts described throughout this application, we are excited about the potential scaling up of the Excel By 5 program to multiple communities within the state, specifically focusing on areas of working families who have Children with High Needs and providing access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs. Implementing such efforts as parenting resource centers, transportation assistance, child specialists and other efforts, the Excel

---

[108] Supported by subproject 5c
[109] Supported by subprojects 7a, 7b, and 7g

by 5 initiative will be a cornerstone of engaging not just some families but entire communities with understanding how to get access to high quality care.[110]

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing–

	2014	2015	2016	2017
MS2S Targets for Early Learning Programs	• Programs at Step 1: 17 percent • Percent of all programs in the TQRIS: 19 percent[111] • Percent of all licensed child care centers in TQRIS at step 2 and above: 9 percent[112] • Percent of all licensed family child care homes in MS2S and above: 22 percent[113] • Percent of Out of School centers in TQRIS: 24 percent[114]	• Programs at Step 1: 25 percent • Percent of all programs in the TQRIS: 30 percent • Percent of all licensed child care centers in TQRIS at step 2 and above: 15 percent • Percent of all licensed family child care homes in MS2S and above: 25 percent • Percent of Out of School centers in TQRIS: 30 percent	• Programs at Step 1: 40 percent • Percent of all programs in the TQRIS: 50 percent • Percent of all licensed child care centers in TQRIS at step 2 and above: 25 percent • Percent of all licensed family child care homes in MS2S and above: 30 percent • Percent of Out of School centers in TQRIS: 35 percent	• Programs at Step 1: 50 percent • Percent of all programs in the TQRIS: 75 percent • Percent of all licensed child care centers in TQRIS at step 2 and above: 45 percent • Percent of all licensed family child care homes in MS2S and above: 40 percent • Percent of Out of School centers in TQRIS: 40 percent
Number of Children Served[115]	• Percent of all children in TQRIS: 8.0 percent[116] • Percent of Children with High Needs: 5.27 percent[117]	• Percent of all children in TQRIS: 23 percent • Percent of Children with High Needs: 9.11 percent	• Percent of all children in TQRIS: 38.1 percent • Percent of Children with High Needs: 22.3 percent	• Percent of all children in TQRIS: 58.3 percent • Percent of Children with High Needs: 38.27 percent

Professional Development and Training Targets	• Number of early learning professionals that **received** credential or degree
	  ○ Credential: 593 (to date)
	  ○ Degree: 488
		• Number of early learning professionals that **received** credential or degree
		  ○ Credential: 1,392 (to date)
		  ○ Degree: 767
			• Number of early learning professionals that **received** credential or degree
			  ○ Credential: 2,005 (to date)
			  ○ Degree: 1,268
				• Number of early learning professionals that **received** credential or degree
				  ○ Credential: 2,800 (to date)
				  ○ Degree: 1,611

---

[110] Supported by subprojects 4a, 7c, and 14d

[111] Percentage found by using CCPS approved providers—licensed and unlicensed (n=1939) who are part of QRIS (n=364)

[112] Percentage found by using number of licensed centers (MDH n=1612) compared to number of Star 2 and above QRS centers (n=143).

[113] Percentage found by comparing In-Home QRS rated 2 and above (n=35) to known number of In-Home QRS participants (n=156)

[114] Percentage found by comparing OoS QRS rated 2 and above (n=4) to known number of OoS QRS participants (n=17)

[115] Denominator used for these two items is total number of children 0-5 in low-income families as reported in (A)(1)-1 (270,715).

[116] Licensed center data were linked with ECI QRIS participant data to determine total enrollment by centers with a star rating (n=21,642).

[117] CCPS data were used to determine the number of children with High Need. It was found that on average, a provider accepts 20 certificates. CCPS data were linked to the licensed center data to find a unique count of centers (n=700).

B(5) Validating the effectiveness of state Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), that the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality

We have addressed both criteria (a) and (b) in the narrative below, due to many of our current and proposed projects addressing both criteria.

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness

Mississippi is committed to the continuous improvement of the state's TQRIS. Mississippi's current QRIS criteria require more than the basic licensure requirements. The Department of Human Services offers competitive grants each year to fund TQRIS improvements along with early childhood education programs. The millions of dollars provided in state funds from the Mississippi Department of Human Services helped provide the means of improving the state's current TQRIS and understanding its effectiveness in improving the quality of learning in the state's child care centers. The private and corporate sectors have funded many quality enhancement programs from the community to state levels. Such funding allows Mississippi to continue improving the advancement of its educational programs by building on previously learned lessons to implement new strategies aimed at helping Head Start Centers provide more quality learning for its youngest learners. Development of a system is critical to move forward these efforts.

History of Current Evaluation Efforts

Mississippi's current TQRIS is designed to assess and improve quality in the licensed early child care and education settings across the state of Mississippi. In 2007, a pilot study conducted in Mississippi to assess the state's existing TQRIS found that funding for child care center

enhancements may provide the best solution to improving the quality of child care in Mississippi.

Head Start uses a number of various evaluation methods. The 2012-2013 MHSA School Readiness Pilot study revealed that more than 75 percent of students are ready to enter kindergarten after leaving Head Start. Two studies (one by PRVO and one with ICS/SHCPI) were conducted that focused on the "fade-out" effect. Both studies, which compared students' 3rd grade assessment tests, found that high school students who attended Head Start performed as well as or better than their peers in SES and peers in non-similar economic situations. Head Start also uses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) as a means of monitoring observations conducted in Head Start programs. The CLASS is used to assess interactional processes within the following domains: (a) emotional support, (b) classroom organization, and (c) instructional support. The National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) reported that CLASS can impact children's school readiness skills.

Evaluation efforts on Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) centers consist of tracking a statistically valid sample of students to determine the outcomes. Funded strictly by the business sector, students are tracked individually across multiple years using multiple instruments. The quality of the program is assessed using Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-R and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-R. Also, an annual independent administrative audit of each Mississippi Building Blocks element has been conducted to ensure success within each element. The approach used in MBB is designed to demonstrate Mississippi's willingness to continue working with the existing infrastructure to improve the quality of school readiness for young children. MBB works with already established child care centers to help them improve the quality of teaching and learning. The five years of data show statistically significant results in school readiness and social emotional growth factors as compared to a control group. The expansion of this type of assistance will continue throughout the state.[118] Additional analysis was conducted on the student outcomes as related to the TQRIS system and showed no evidence of a link between the two, thus prompting the need for revision and future evaluation and validity of the new MS2S.

---

[118] Supported by subprojects 3a, 7a, 7b, 10b, 10d

Proposed Plan

Mississippi is now putting measures in place that will rewrite the current TQRIS.[119] We are now prepared to embark on a new validation process that includes a rigorous and comprehensive validation study of the new MS2S. This new validation plan consists of two main goals: (1) to ensure differential levels of quality across all five dimensions of practice and (2) to determine the relationship between the quality steps in MS2S and children's readiness for school.

Validation Study Criteria

The validation study consists of three criteria.

- Rigorous research design methodology - an independent evaluator from a validation firm will be contracted to design rigorous employee research design methodologies.
- Expansion upon previous efforts- previous validation efforts such as environmental and classroom quality will be expanded to include key measure of constructs such as children's learning, development, and school readiness.
- Connecting evaluation results - all evaluation results will be connected with the current technical assistance efforts offered for centers in the TQRIS.

Proposed Methodology

The following methodology is proposed for annual validation evaluation of the MS2S. The validation study is slated to begin in fall 2014 and will utilize data collected in the following three levels[120]:

1. Program level will include MS2S indicators, administrative data, and information on technical assistance received.
2. Classroom level will include observations, teacher questionnaires, and data on professional development received.
3. Child level will include preK assessments, Mississippi's Kindergarten Entry Assessment data, any formative assessment data, and parent satisfaction surveys if applicable.

---

[119] Supported by subproject 5b
[120] Supported by subprojects 5a and 5d

This methodology is based on lessons learned from the multi-state INQUIRE QRIS research consortium as well as other states that have conducted such valuations, such as Ohio, Washington, and Maryland.

Description of the Sample

During the initial year of the pilot to take place in 2014-2015, the sample will be a randomly selected sample of centers participating in the TQRIS. Beginning in year 2 and every year after, a full scale study of all centers in current TQRIS will be conducted. PreK programs that are funded publicly by the state will participate. However, we will continue to implement strategies from other states to have increased participation from centers that voluntarily participate in the TQRIS through incentives, additional technical assistance, etc. Through this contract, we will identify 3-5 RTT-ELC states that are models in evaluating their TQRIS to understand their process for approaching these centers. These states will be identified based on their success for increasing participation in their TQRIS as well as their similarities in contextual challenges to Mississippi. Reports will be generated based on scans of their state strategies, and as appropriate, we would be able to provide travel for a select number of state or program staff to travel to Mississippi and assist with our current efforts and programs. Mississippi believes that by learning from other states directly, we can 1) aggressively and efficiently implement strategies based on previous experiences and 2) expand our network of support from states so that we can continue to rely on these relationships and a knowledge base for sustained growth and success with other efforts.[121]

We will be using a full sample of all program staff and child level sample data. These data will be used to describe the characteristics of Mississippi's programs and to examine relationships between quality indicators and children's learning in preK and school readiness.
- MS2S quality indicators
- Administration data
- PD and TA data
- Children's learning progressions across the preK timeline- using screeners and preK assessments

---

[121] Supported by subproject 5e

- Data on child outcomes in third grade - Will be determined from LifeTracks. This element is already in place.
- Parent questionnaires - Will include items on demographics, awareness of TQRIS, and ratings of their child's academic and social skills.
- Teacher questionnaires - Will address early learning educators' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about teaching. This will be similar to the TQRIS parent questionnaire used in Maryland and Ohio.

Proposed Research Questions

1. How do the steps as defined by the TQRIS accurately reflect differential levels of program quality?
2. What are the relationships between program characteristics (subsidy, size, region, program type, etc.) and program quality as measured by student outcomes?
3. How does program quality differ in regard to programs that participate in TQRIS and are rated at step two and above as measured by student outcomes?
4. What is the relationship of family engagement with programs at steps four and five on the TQRIS, and how does this impact family engagement in transition to kindergarten as measured by student outcomes?
5. What dimensions or domains of the TQRIS program participation have the greatest impact on child learning and developmental outcomes as measured on the states Kindergarten Entry Assessment as well as third-grade score results?
6. How do higher-rated programs on the TQRIS impact learning and development of young children compared to either nonparticipating or lower rated programs as measured by student outcomes?

The management and execution of this evaluation would be completed through the Mississippi Department of Education in partnership with the TQRIS management team.[122] The responsibilities of the TQRIS management team will be defined by the state agency or a division within the state agency. Also, we will rely on the oversight of SECAC, our state's early learning governance board and the lead agency on this grant, to ensure broad representation amongst the

---

[122] Supported by subproject 5d

partnerships. This group would serve as a resource to the evaluator in designing and implementing the evaluation, ensuring good participation and capturing high-quality data.

Correlating the changes in TQRIS to Children's Learning, Development, and School Readiness

Mississippi intends to link the evaluation of the "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform with child outcomes in several different manners. This evaluation will be an ongoing assessment of the plan's quality standards and system design.[123] Longitudinal research is planned to examine the extent to which measures of the program quality allow for positive outcomes in school readiness for children. As a result, this will create a comprehensive quality improvement and outcome system for early learning. Child data (e.g., the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, third grade end-of-course tests, other assessment data, etc.) will be used for continuous improvements in the key areas of the early childhood system.

Meeting the needs of children with disabilities or other specialized needs.

Because children with disabilities and other specialized needs often require tailored services, the actuality of every child in attendance experiencing the overall quality of the program may be called into question. Data on children's progress will be gathered so that we can understand how the changes across the tiers of the TQRIS are associated with children's progress in developing school readiness skills. Additionally, TQRIS quality measures of special populations of children will be evaluated.[124] The quality measures from ERS can depict the experiences of most but not all of the children in the child care facilities. Although our specific strategy has not been identified for this proposal, we will again rely on the peer state network developed from 3-5 states identified with similar issues, who have developed promising practice strategies for meeting the needs of children with disabilities or other specialized needs. It is Mississippi's preference to rely on other states to assist us with this specific effort rather than rely on an external contract at this time. Because this is an important objective for our early learning "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform, we want to design our approach so that the information gathering from other states can proceed with or without the additional grant funds.

---

[123] Supported by subprojects 2b, 5d, and 8b
[124] Supported by subprojects 2b and 5d

Table 1: High Quality Plan for Meeting Selection Criteria B

Section Criteria B

Aligned with "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform:

- Goal 2: Expand state's Revised TQRIS system at scale to promotes quality improvements statewide and improve access to quality for high-needs children.
- Goal 4: Improve professional knowledge on the implications for child outcomes early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers on the statewide kindergarten entry assessment
- Goal 5: Integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system

	Lead Agency	Allocation of funding from RTTELC Grant	Allocation of funding from non-RTTELC funds	Alignment with Selection Criteria				
				B(1)	B(2)	B(3)	B(4)	B(5)
Project #1: RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	SECAC	83%	17%	x	x	x	x	x
Project #2: Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	MDE	100%	0%	x		x		
Project #3: Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	MDE	72%	28%	x				
Project #4: Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	MDE	95%	5%		x	x		
Project #5: Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	MDE	56%	44%		x			
Project #6: Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	MDE	81%	19%		x			
Project #7: Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	SECAC	79%	21%		x			
Project #8: Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	MDE	64%	36%	x	x		x	
Project #9: Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	SECAC	94%	6%	x			x	
Project #10: Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	MDE	78%	22%	x	x		x	

Project #11: Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	MDE	72%	28%		x	x	x	
Project #13: Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	nSPARC	21%	79%					x
Project #14: Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	SECAC/DHS	45%	55%	x		x		

Performance Measure for (B)(4)(c)(1): Increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

	Baseline (Today)	Target- end of calendar year 2014	Target- end of calendar year 2015	Target- end of calendar year 2016	Target- end of calendar year 2017
Total number of programs covered by the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	522	626	717	809	900
Number of programs in Tier 1(lowest)	273	320	372	424	475
Number of programs in Tier 2	80	96	110	124	138
Number of programs in Tier 3	35	52	60	68	77
Number of programs in Tier 4	18	22	26	30	33
Number of programs in Tier 5(highest)	9	9	10	12	13

Include a row for each tier in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, customize the labeling of the tiers, and indicate the highest and lowest tier.

Baseline numbers are actual data from the Quality Stars Database, Mississippi Department of Human Services, 2013.

Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2): Increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	**Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State**	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percent of Children with High Needs Participating in Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System										
		Baseline (Today)		**Target-end of calendar year 2014**		**Target - end of calendar year 2015**		**Target-end of calendar year 2016**		**Target- end of calendar year 2017**	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool Specify: Mississippi Department of Education public school PreK programs	5,310	372	7	1,062	20	1,328	25	1,593	30	1,859	35
Early Head Start and Head Start[125]	29,971	77	0.003	599	2	1,199	4	1,798	6	2,398	8
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	2,007	141	7	401	20	502	25	602	30	703	35
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	10,244	717	7	2,049	20	2,561	25	3,073	30	3,585	35
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	34,894	2,443	7	6,978	20	8,723	25	10,468	30	12,213	35
Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program	10,030	702	7	2,006	20	2,508	25	3,009	30	3,511	35

---

[125] Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2): Increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	**Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State**	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percent of Children with High Needs Participating in Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		**Target- end of calendar year 2014**		**Target - end of calendar year 2015**		**Target- end of calendar year 2016**		**Target- end of calendar year 2017**	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%

Mississippi has designated Steps 3, 4 and 5 as the top tier of the MCCQSS. Baseline data estimated for State-funded preschool, IDEA, and Title I, and CCDF. Baseline data based on actual numbers for Head Start.

Selection Criteria

Focused Investment Areas – Sections C, D & E

MISSISSIPPI

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

The state of Mississippi has made significant progress in recent years in offering a quality education to children that promotes health and well-being and engages and supports families - from the formation of the Mississippi Office of Healthy Schools, which oversees a host of programs focused on promoting the health and safety of Mississippi children from as young as age three to initiatives such as the state's TQRIS (which requires family engagement activities at several rating levels). On the ground, Mississippi's early learning and development centers have also made great strides meeting the needs of children and providing supporting tools and resources to families and child care providers. This section will provide an overview of Mississippi's accomplishments toward meeting its children's health, behavioral, and developmental needs and will discuss the ways in which we plan to improve.

C(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards; and involving families as partners and building parents' capacity to promote their children's physical, social, and emotional health

Mississippi appreciates the critical need for a common set of health and safety standards that promote children's physical, social, and emotional development, as well as a solid approach to supporting children's developmental needs through efforts such as free healthcare services for Medicaid-eligible children, early childhood medical screenings, and child nutrition programs. The state has demonstrated its commitment to these goals through implementation of several key initiatives. The following existing programs and efforts attest to the comprehensive involvement

of the state and its partners towards a quality early learning and development system that promotes the health and safety of all Mississippi's children, especially those with High Needs:

- Mississippi's existing Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the revised TQRIS system, Mississippi Steps to Succeed (MS2S), which is currently being developed
- Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers
- Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children
- Formation of the Mississippi Office of Healthy Schools

Mississippi's Current Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Mississippi's current TQRIS – is designed to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in a licensed child care setting in five areas: 1) Program Administration, 2) Professional Qualifications of Staff, 3) Child Learning Environment, 4) Family Involvement, and 5) Program Evaluation. The system uses two evaluation tools for the rating of early learning and development centers overall and on criteria specifically focused on ensuring health and safety: a) the Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS-R), which contains elements on personal care routines (such as health and safety practices), listening and talking, activities, parents and staff, etc.; and b) the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R), which contains indicators for health and safety, among others (see Appendix C for a copy of ITERS-R and ECERS-R).

Currently, health standards are required for Mississippi Child Care Licensing and meet the 1st step of participation in the state's current TQRIS. The revised rating system, MS2S, which is currently in progress and would be accelerated through the award of an RTT-ELC grant,[126] will include additional and more rigorous health and safety standards that will be required of early learning and development centers for advancement to several of the system's rating scale steps (see section B(2) for more information on the state's current TQRIS and the upcoming revised system). This new rating system will also incorporate and align with self-care, health, and safety skills from the state's recently released standards for infants/toddlers and three-year-olds and four-year-olds.[127] Furthermore, additional screenings and assessments will occur as a result of the adoption of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment[128] (see Competitive Priority 4 for more

---

[126] Supported by subproject 5b
[127] Supported by subproject 2s
[128] Supported by subproject 11a

information) and the screenings as described and used in the Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) model. Many health components will be added to the new MS2S promoting children's health and safety.[129]

Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers, and for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children

The Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers and the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children were developed based on national standards for Early Childhood Education. Included in the guidelines, which are being used throughout the state and will be incorporated in the forthcoming MS2S early learning and development center rating system, are competencies on self-help and physical development. A recent revision to the Early Learning Standards added items focused on self-care, health, and safety skills. (See Appendix C)

Mississippi Office of Healthy Schools

Through the strategies, programs, services, and initiatives coordinated by the Office of Healthy Schools, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) continues to focus on and promote the undeniable connection between healthy students and schools, academic achievement, and solid family engagement – services that reach 152 school districts. Because a healthy school is a vital part of a healthy community, a commitment to successful collaboration is required from school administrators, staff, students, parents, and the community. The Office of Healthy Schools is committed and prepared to offer technical assistance and services to enable schools and communities to create effective Coordinated School Health Programs based on the eight component model developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to encourage life-long healthful behaviors that contribute to productive citizens.[130]

The Office of Healthy Schools oversees many programs focused on improving the health and safety of Mississippi children ages three and up. Some of the programs that directly impact preK Children with High Needs include the screening programs (described above) and the Summer Food Service Program for Children, which provides nutritious meals to preschool and school-age children from needy areas during extended vacation periods. Organizations that may sponsor the

---

[129] Supported by subproject 5b
[130] Supported by subproject 14b

summer program are limited to: (1) public or private nonprofit school food authorities and residential summer camps; (2) state, local, municipal or county governmental entities; (3) private nonprofit organizations, subject to certain conditions; and (4) public or private nonprofit colleges or universities that are currently participating in the National Youth Sports Program and/or Upward Bound Program.

Scaling Up the State's Early Childhood Screening Program Using Grant Funds

The development and implementation of a set of health and safety standards can also serve as a screening tool in early childhood. Screening in early childhood supports children's readiness for kindergarten and promotes positive child health and developmental outcomes.[131] To that end, the state proposes to compile a selection of criteria in order to meet the needs of children, child care educators and providers, and parents. This set of health and safety standards will incorporate the best knowledge and evidence of relevant standards from other states. Benchmark studies will be utilized as the backbone of this effort to build on a series of propositions. This endeavor can become a reality through the RTT-ELC grant and serve as a foundation for utilization of a common set of health and safety standards statewide.[132]

Additionally, we propose expanding current screening program efforts that would be made available to all early learning children. The state will expand use of a health and developmental screening and referral rates for all young children by integrating routine developmental screening into well-child visits. The programs will be developed in partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), and MDE and will cover all licensed child care facilities throughout the state. The program can be initially funded with the RTT-ELC grant and eventually sustained with contributions from state and private funding.[133]

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an ongoing basis in meeting the health standards

---

[131] Haskins, R. and Sawhill. I. (2009) Creating an Opportunity Society. Washington, DC. Brookings Institution Press.
[132] Supported by subproject 1e
[133] Supported by subproject 14c

The qualifications of early childhood educators is one of the most critical elements of a quality early learning and development program. Prior to many of the revisions to the state's early learning educator workforce (as described in Section D(1)), Mississippi had traditionally low credential requirements for staff working in private child care centers (compared to the minimum education requirements for early learning educators in state-funded preK collaborations - a Bachelor of Arts degree in an education-related field). Preparing children for early school readiness and successful outcomes means, among other things, employment and training of qualified and specialized educators. Specifically, educators who are trained and supported on an ongoing basis in meeting the health standards of early childhood learning. Mississippi is committed to provide training and professional development to educators in order to support the state's health standards.

Education and Training

Currently, the addition of an early childhood education curriculum to Institutions of Higher Learning is currently underway in eight accredited colleges of Mississippi. With the help of RTT-ELC grant funds, the state will expand the curriculum in Higher Learning Institutions to include coursework and specialized degrees in Early Childhood Education.[134] Moreover, Mississippi will increase training for educators and childcare providers to enable them to more effectively serve Children with High Needs and meet state standards for early childhood including health standards.[135] As a result of these efforts, early child care providers/educators will be better prepared to address the needs of children with disabilities from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. By increasing educational and training opportunities for early learning educators by providing year round/ongoing/on-site mentoring for early childhood educators and child care providers, these individuals will be better equipped to serve Children with High Needs. Early childhood educators who are well-trained, use best practices, and implement Universal Design for Learning guidelines in their instruction will afford Children with High Needs greater opportunities for learning.

---

[134] Supported by subprojects 9a and 9b
[135] Supported by subprojects 7b and 10c

Using Grant Funding to Scale Up Promising Practices

Existing training includes Project PREPARE (PREschool Personnel Assistance, Resources and Education), which is funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Office for Children and Youth, and is coordinated by The University of Southern Mississippi, Institute of Disability Studies. The primary goal of Project PREPARE is to improve the quality of care for children in licensed child care settings by enhancing the professional development opportunities needed for centers to successfully include high-risk children and children with special needs. It provides professional development opportunities, support, and resources to enable licensed child care programs to better serve children with special needs.[136]

Cultural and linguistic competence training for early child care providers will be increased to occur on an annual basis. Once available training opportunities have been reviewed and analyzed, cultural and linguistic competency trainings will be included. Funding will be needed for development of training, additional trainers, and overall increased training opportunities on an annual basis. This will also require local level programs to provide services to young children to develop and implement a cultural/linguistic plan.[137]

Like many of our technical assistance efforts we plan to scale, these improvements to programs addressing and implementing health standards will be supported and better coordinated through our integration of technical assistance resources across available funding streams to ensure that all programs receive consistent messages[138].

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity, and providing information and guidance to families to promote healthy habits at home

In Mississippi, between 10 and 15 percent of low-income children are obese – among the highest rates in the country. Naturally, there are counties in the state where this number decreases, reaching close to 5-10 percent, but overall, the obesity prevalence for Mississippi follows a pattern similar to that found in most Southern states (Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

---

[136] Supported by subproject 10d
[137] Supported by subprojects 7a and 10d
[138] Supported by subproject 1d and 7g

Furthermore, data show that Americans living in the South are more likely to be less physically active than Americans living in the West, Northeast, and Midwest regions of the country. Also, state regulation specifying that children shall be engaged in moderate- or vigorous-intensity physical activity in licensed, regulated child care centers is still non-existent in Mississippi.

Past State and Local Success Stories

The state has pursued several initiatives to address this problem, some highlights of which are described below.

Preventing Obesity with Every Resource

Mississippi has received funding through the National Governors Association to address the high rates of childhood obesity through a multifaceted and collaborative program called Preventing Obesity with Every Resource (POWER), which is managed by the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Healthy Schools. Several potential policy initiatives were introduced, with some of them becoming focused priorities such as:

- Improving built environments to promote physical activity in communities
- Increasing the number of school nurses in schools
- Improving state standards for day care centers and youth programs to promote healthy foods, etc.

These policy initiatives were adopted and implemented nationwide; successful results and decisions for expansion were reported by the states.[139] Several policy initiatives focused on promoting healthy eating and physical activity were pursued through POWER (see Appendix C).

Increasing the number of school nurses in schools:

The Pascagoula School District increased its nursing staff from two school nurses for the 2001-2002 school year to eight school nurses for the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, through the POWER program, a clinic was set up in the Cleveland School District to provide wellness screenings in association with Medicaid's Cool Kids program and educate early learning educators and staff on numerous chronic and communicable diseases.

---

[139] http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/3593.pdf

<u>Improving state standards for day care centers and youth programs to promote healthy foods:</u>
The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) secured 150 free Color Me Healthy toolkits to use with preschools. Designed to engage children through all five senses, the Color Me Healthy program contains lesson plans to be used by early learning educators, along with posters, stamps, games, music, and songs for lessons and activity times. The toolkit includes newsletters providing parents with kid-friendly recipes and tips on nutrition and physical activity. Menu Writing 101 is a three hour class offered through Mississippi's Child Care Licensure Division that is designed to help preschool facilities improve the quality of meals without adding costs. The Color Me Healthy program and the Child Care Licensure Divisions classes have reached more than 150 childcare centers across the state.

Mississippi State Department of Health Educational Material on Healthy Eating Habits and Physical Activity in Children

MSDH produces and has available a series of educational material regarding healthy eating habits and physical activity in children.   These informative guides indicate how family involvement regarding food and physical activity, goal setting, and reorganization of eating habits, as well as physical activity tips, can have an impact on a child's daily routine. Along these lines, MSDH provides information and guidelines for setting up a Farm to School or Farm to Preschool programs. Farm to Preschool programs, in particular, bring healthy meals to daycare or preschool settings. Healthy eating habits are installed early in life, thus resulting in greater benefits for children. The programs improve student nutrition, create nutrition awareness, and support local farmers.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Mississippi is one of the original states to participate in USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). The FFVP provides funds for schools to provide free servings of fresh fruits and fresh vegetables throughout the day to Mississippi students. The FFVP shows children that fresh fruits and vegetables are healthy and tasty alternatives to snacks high in fat, sugar, or salt. The goal of the FFVP is to:

- Create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices
- Expand the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience

- Increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption
- Make a difference in children's diets to impact their present and future health

Using Grant Funding to Scale Up Promising Practices

Increase Number and Expand Services of Child Care Health Consultants

Currently, Mississippi "Making a Plan" (MAP) Teams provide some of the basic services offered by Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) in other states. With the help of RTT-ELC grant funds, Mississippi will expand its program to train new staff specifically to serve as local CCHCs who will offer a broader array of services than the very limited set currently provided by MAP Teams, focusing specifically on educating families and early learning center staff on health and safety issues. The state will hire 15 additional FTE CCHCs who will serve in counties with the largest proportion of Children with High Needs.[140] These CCHCs will allow the state to train center staff to integrate children's connection to a medical home into the center's routines and policies. In addition, the CCHCs will coach centers on overall health literacy and promotion, including healthy eating habits and physical activity. These CCHCs will have backgrounds as health professionals (e.g., registered nurses) and will have experience with and an interest in children's health and knowledge of resources available to the community. Specific services offered by CCHCs will include activities such as on-site visits with child care providers; evaluation of early learning center staff training needs; providing educational training and information about nutrition, oral health, allergies, etc.; reviewing and providing information about children's health records; assisting with applications for health insurance and community resources; and helping to ensure that children with special needs are receiving appropriate support services. By the end of the first year of the grant, we plan to have hired and trained the additional CCHCs using curriculum available from the National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants with supplementary materials focused on Mississippi-specific resources. During the next three years of the grant, these consultants will continue working with communities, collecting and reporting data, and refining their services to better meet the needs of their communities.

Promoting Healthy Eating Habits through Home Visiting Efforts

---

[140] Supported by subproject 14c

The MDHS and the MSDH have been designated as the authorized entities to seek funds and administer the evidence-based home visitation program for at-risk Mississippi families under the ACA Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program.

Healthy Homes Mississippi (HHM) aims to address the support of home visitation for at-risk families. Goals for HHM include providing comprehensive home visiting services to families, improving maternal and children's health, improving cognitive and social emotional development, ensuring healthy parent and child relationships, and incorporating home visiting in the early childhood system. Objectives to support these goals include:

- Identify and enroll families in HHM
- Educate families about health and safety factors
- Support and refer families to education and employment services
- Provide education about best practices for healthy child, parent, and family development.

HHM is implementing the Healthy Families America (HFA) home visiting program utilizing the Partners for a Health Baby (PHB) curriculum and currently serves 550 families, with planned expansion using funds from this grant to triple the number of families served.[141]

HHM works with community partners in state counties, and staff will identify existing linkages and partnerships to develop a resource network of providers in the areas of health, mental health, early childhood development, substance abuse, domestic violence prevention, child maltreatment prevention, child welfare, education, and other social and health services.

The state will work with Federal partners and participate in national evaluation activities. HHM shares data with the state's longitudinal data system, LifeTracks, which houses the data for the state. LifeTracks will provide analyses on important research and implementation questions as we plan to significantly increase the reach in areas of Children with High Needs.[142]

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who—

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security

---

[141] Supported by subproject 14h
[142] Supported by subproject 13a

Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and, where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care

The state of Mississippi is dedicated to the goal of identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs, and recognizes the challenges of both identifying and serving this population. Therefore, Mississippi has chosen to place emphasis on developing a high-quality screening and referral system, to identify all Children with High Needs within the state at the earliest time possible, and to provide a seamless referral system to deliver necessary services quickly and efficiently.

Federally Qualified Health Centers Organizations (FQHC)

The FQHC include organizations positioned throughout the state of Mississippi. As such, the FQHCs are uniquely organized, arranged, and postured to best accommodate and provide screening services to the population. This network of FQHCs is the vehicle that economically and efficiently influences healthy progress in Mississippi.

- The RHCs program is operated through the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), Office of Rural Health. The RHC program is intended to increase primary care services for Medicaid and Medicare patients in rural communities, and RHCs receive enhanced reimbursement rates for providing these services. RHCs can be public, private, or non-profit and must be located in rural, underserved areas. RHCs are certified through the MSDH, Division of Health Facilities Licensure and Certification. Mississippi will expand access to rural health clinics by creating three additional centers in areas with the most need.[143]

- The CHIP is designed to provide health care insurance for children in families without health insurance or with inadequate health insurance coverage. CHIP does not replace Medicaid. In fact, a child must be determined ineligible for Medicaid before eligibility

---

[143] Supported by subproject 14b

for CHIP can be considered. CHIP covers children from birth to age 19, and eligibility is continuous for one year. Services include health screenings (including vision and hearing exams), preventive health care such as immunizations, inpatient and outpatient hospital care, doctor's or clinic visits for well-child checkups and sick-child care, lab services, prescription medications, eyeglasses and hearing aids, dental care, and mental health services. There are no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

Early Head Start / Head Start

The Early Head Start and Head Start programs are required to implement valid and reliable screening measures for all children enrolled into their programs. Screening for developmental, sensory, and behavioral concerns must occur within 45 days of the child entering the program.

Local Multidisciplinary Assessment and Planning (MAP) Teams

MAP teams review cases concerning children and youth who have serious emotional disturbances and who are at immediate risk for an inappropriate 24-hour institutional placement; this is achieved by providing the necessary resources to keep them in their home and community. The MAP teams are required to have participation from local representatives such as education, mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, health, rehabilitation, and parents/caregivers. MAP teams can serve children, birth to age 5, but have historically focused on serving school-aged children. The RTT-ELC grant funds will support the effort to expand MAP teams to include children birth to 5 years of age.[144]

Using Grant Funding to Scale Up Promising Practices

The state of Mississippi will work to maximize participation in ongoing health care as part of well child care, including nutrition and oral health, with support from providers such as the FQHC and RHCs. This initiative will seek to increase public awareness regarding the screening programs through the efforts of DOM and participating agencies. A social marketing campaign promoting this will be conducted, thereby increasing the exposure of the public to information. Outreach efforts will include educational materials such as flyers and Public Service Announcements. Increasing the public's awareness of the availability of the program and the location and choice of providers across the state will thereby increase the number of children

---

[144] Supported by subproject 14b

screened at the earliest age possible and identified with need for referral to other services/treatment.[145]

The state will conduct a review of the current screening program efforts' reliability as a developmental screening tool for identifying children with special needs. If it is determined that a more reliable screening tool is needed, one will be developed through a subproject to expand use of a health and developmental screening and referral rates for all young children within the medical home by integrating routine developmental screening into well-child visits.[146] Upon approval for use, training will be provided by DOM for providers administering the screen.

Finally, as the purpose of this initiative fits with the broader goal of inter-agency data sharing, data from screening programs will be submitted into the state's longitudinal data system LifeTracks.[147] Funds will be needed for hardware additions needed for data submission. This will result from collaboration agreements between DOM and Mississippi State University to provide initial and subsequent data from screenings. By merging these data, a better understanding of children's needs can be obtained.

Partnerships among the MSDH, screening providers, and referral programs will form to discuss utilization of a uniform referral process. This uniform referral process will be developed and adopted by all community service agencies and will be based on identification of the need level addressed by each provider/program. This implementation of the referral protocol will be achieved by revised and integrated regulations and policies among participating agencies.

It is expected that the referral protocol will be finalized during the first year of the grant. The referral process will begin with screenings, which will cover medical as well as developmental areas. It is our intention that these screenings serve as an entry point into the system for Children with High Needs. Once screening has taken place, there will be a need for a uniform and standardized referral process (protocol) so that a child is referred to services/supports on his/her intensity of need.

---

[145] Supported by subproject 13b, 13e, and 14c
[146] Supported by subproject 14c
[147] Supported by subproject 13c and 13d

In addition, providers will be trained on the Uniform Referral Process and feedback from providers on the uniform referral process will be gathered for future revisions, if necessary. Policies for follow-up and obtaining disposition data on children referred for specialized services will be developed, primarily by including follow-up regulations in the Uniform Referral Process.

In order to better identify needed services and ensure children receive the services in a timely and effective manner, we propose to expand the MAP Teams.[148] Mississippi's MAP Teams have a demonstrated record of identifying and following through with the needs of children. This initiative will begin by developing and implementing collaborative plans among members of the children's MAP teams, such as Head Start and Community Mental Health Centers. Next, the current local children's MAP team program for school-aged children will be expanded to include children birth to five and will cover all 82 counties. The number of MAP teams and number of children served have been increasing since FY 2007 (specifically, in 2007 there were 32 MAP Teams serving a population of 805 children/youth; by 2011 the number of MAP Teams increased to 42, serving approximately 1,100 children/youth.)

In addition, this initiative will provide training to the Early Childhood MAP team representatives on the model of the child and his/her needs and family, infrastructure building, and cultural and linguistic competence, as teams are phased in during Year 1 (five teams) and Year 2 (six teams). Finally, to increase the use of mental health pre-school programs at the Community Mental Health Centers, a Coordinator will assist with referral of eligible children.

Community pediatricians will work in conjunction with the Mississippi Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Mississippi Early Childhood Institute (ECI) to develop a protocol to train residents as well as practicing physicians on the need for early identification of normal and atypical development in early childhood. The ECI will serve as content developers and trainers. The collection of longitudinal for residency rotations will be used to deliver training at state AAP chapter and Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians' continuing medical education meetings. In addition, it could be distributed to other statewide or community-based meetings. Finally, this training module could potentially be replicable across other specialties (e.g., nurse practitioners). Furthermore, the project will distribute early brain

---

[148] Supported by subproject 14b

development materials to parents and caregivers through pediatric and other clinics and the media.

The immediate, short-term impact of this training could potentially affect thousands of children in our state as pediatricians and other specialists begin to optimally address developmental issues of young children. This method of physician training addresses sustainability of the project. In the long term, benefits will be seen in public health and in fiscal terms.

This project will increase the proportion of children who are ready for school in all four domains of health development: physical development, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, language, and cognitive development. It will do so by increasing physician and physician-in-training knowledge and understanding of early brain development and how it can be impacted. This education will then be shared with parents, potential parents, caregivers, and the public, and will positively impact how young children are nurtured and taught.

Customizing Technical Assistance Programs for Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

The areas of improvement described in this section can be illustrated in a population with special needs - the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians - who live in a reservation of 35,000 acres across seven counties in East Central Mississippi.   Working with this tribe, we strive to promote parent and community engagement and capacity building.   The young children of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians represent one of the larger groups of ELL in the state and has representation on the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC), the governing group for this grant proposal.   Many young children speak what is referred to as Choclish (a combination of Choctaw and English), which presents problems in developing competency in one language since it is a hybrid native language. With the help of funds from the RTT-ELC grant and with cooperation from tribal representatives, we plan to achieve the following results in the children of Choctaw Indians:

- Revision of the curriculum for infants through four-year olds with modifications related to language and culture and parent engagement.
- The tribe's use of the Child Care Regulations as currently enforced by the MSDH as the standards for tribal child care. Since centers are regulated by the state-approved licensing standards, all licensed centers were required to enroll in the state's current TQRIS in 2012. In-home providers on the reservation will also be expected to register through the state's current TQRIS and participate.
- During Year 1, the establishment of a new resource and referral center to be located on the reservation. Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral System (MSCCR&R) technical assistance staff will be employed from Choctaw applicants to support the early care and education programs and increase the quality of their programs. Additional revised TQRIS monitors will be employed by Choctaw applicants to monitor the programs to determine their quality step rating.
- Teaching of cultural values and native language to young children. This training will be provided during Year 1 to tribal child care leaders and other who may be interested.
- Liaison support of tribal staff to monitor progress and support the activities described in the following three items
- Establishment of a Resource & Referral Center on the reservation that is staffed by Choctaw early childhood educators trained by the MSCCR&R Network to provide training to all tribal early care and education providers while maintaining the native culture and language of the Choctaw tribe.
- In school preK programs, training of school employees to administer the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (used to assess interactional processes within the domains of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support) and the provision of two tribal members trained in CLASS TA.

(e) Developing a comprehensive approach to increase the capacity and improve the overall quality of Early Learning and Development Programs to support and address the social and emotional development (including infant-early childhood mental health) of children from birth to age five

Under the coordinating efforts of State Early Childhood Advisory Council's (SECAC) of Mississippi, the state will continue to develop a strategic plan pertaining to efforts, programs, and resources supporting children birth to five years. A summary of SECAC's accomplishments, over the last five years, are described below.

Unified Data System Systems Development

SECAC worked with the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Center (nSPARC) at Mississippi State University (MSU) to expand the state's longitudinal system to include more data on early childhood education programs, providers, and children. Following are examples of data elements for the longitudinal system: the number of participating child care programs; their ratings in the state's current TQRIS; child care licensing information; data on children attending Part C early intervention programs; data on children attending Head Start/ Early Head Start; the number of children in preK programs and Part B special education programs; early learning educator certifications; and data on early childhood education graduates from the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, the community college board, and others. The Center has begun a study examining the ten lowest performing school districts in the state. It will consider collecting data on children's environments and early learning educator qualifications.

Coordination and Collaboration

SECAC completed a consolidated services model study of early childhood programs administered by Mississippi's Departments of Human Services (MDHS), Health, and Education for the purpose of streamlining services. The study reviewed Mississippi's current landscape of early childhood services, feedback obtained from various state stakeholders, and research on best practice models in other states.

Family Child Care Provider Registry

The SEACAC and the MDHS developed a voluntary registry of family child care providers. Partnering organizations have helped recruit and enlist more than 750 family child care providers, and an additional 300 providers will be recruited each year.

Review of State Health Services

A review of state health services, resources, and practices for children birth to five was completed in 2012, and findings have helped inform next steps for streamlining existing services and understanding outstanding needs.[149]

Parent Outreach & Education

Under the leadership of former Gov. Haley Barbour, the Council implemented the Baby's First Year dissemination initiative for all new parents statewide. Forty thousand calendars with developmental milestones and other resources were sent to help parents track, monitor, and guide children's growth. Calendars also were distributed by the Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MCCR&R).

Using Grant Funding to Scale Up Promising Practices

SECAC will continue partnering and cooperating with a wide range of state and local stakeholders to expand Early Learning and Development programs for children birth to age five in general and Children with High Needs in particular. These programs will support: a) community building[150], b) infrastructure development or expansion,[151] and c) implementation of evidence-based programs and practices.[152] The state will build on its network of Child Care Health Consultants who will provide onsite technical assistance and help develop policies and environments to promote children's health and development.[153] The RTT-ELC activity will also recruit a wider range of medical providers for screening young children.[154] Incentives for medical conferences or tax exemptions could help boost participation of medical professionals. Strengthening Mississippi's approach to assessment and ensuring that children are screened and then referred for services is an investment of the upmost importance in early childhood education.

---

[149] http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/pdfs/eccd_secac/eccd_MSSECACHealthAccessFinalReport.pdf
[150] Supported by subproject 14a
[151] Supported by subproject 7b and 10d
[152] Supported by subproject 5d and 7a
[153] Supported by subproject 14b
[154] Supported by subproject 14c

Performance Measures for (C)(3)(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual statewide targets.

	Baseline and annual targets				
	Baseline (Today, if known) If unknown please use narrative to explain plan for defining baseline and setting and meeting annual targets	**Target for end of calendar year 2014**	**Target for end of calendar year 2015**	**Target for end of calendar year 2016**	**Target for end of calendar year 2017**
Number of Children with High Needs screened	99,617 (71% of total eligible)	109,579 (76% of total eligible)	115,058 (81% of total eligible)	120,811 (86% of total eligible)	126,852 (91% of total eligible)
Number of Children with High Needs referred for services who received follow-up/treatment	77,056 (Medical and/or Dental services received)	84,376 (Medical and/or Dental services received)	88,595 (Medical and/or Dental services received)	93,025 (Medical and/or Dental services received)	97,676 (Medical and/or Dental services received)
Number of Children with High Needs who participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well child care	63,075 (63% of total eligible)	69,035 (63% of total eligible)	72,487 (63% of total eligible)	76,111 (63% of total eligible)	79,917 (63% of total eligible)
Of these participating children, the number or percentage of children who are up-to-date in a schedule of well child care	63,075 (100% of total participating)	69,035 (100% of total participating)	72,487 (100% of total participating)	76,111 (100% of total participating)	79,917 (100% of total participating)

The EPSDT baseline data for number of children screened and number of children referred for services was pulled from the FFY2012 CMS Annual EPSDT Participation Report and represents actual volumes. The EPSDT data for the number of children who participate in ongoing health care and number of children up-to-date in a schedule was estimated based upon data pulled from the SFY2013 MMIS System HealthExplorer Report for Number of Children with Immunizations.

C(4) Engaging and supporting families

(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development and help families build protective factors

The involvement of parents in the education of their children can almost always prove to be beneficial. The Center for the Study of Social Policy noted that evidence shows that early childhood is a critically important time period for social, intellectual, emotional, and moral development. Therefore, it is extremely important for families of children attending child care facilities to be involved. As such, aligning standards to include measures that embrace family engagement could only prove to be a win-win situation for all parties involved.

Parental Engagement Standards in the Current TQRIS

As described in section B(1), family engagement is one of the five primary criteria of Mississippi's current TQRIS. Under the current rating system, to achieve a Step 2 rating,[155] early learning and development must provide quarterly communications to the parent (e.g., newsletters), hold annual conferences with parents, and use a central communication tool for updating parents on events and other opportunities (e.g., up-to-date bulletin boards, a calendar of classroom activities and home learning activities).

Parental Engagement Steps in Action: Petal, Mississippi

Step 2: Petal, a small town in southern Mississippi, has developed a model to maintain learning from birth through age three. To keep families engaged, this program either mails or emails monthly reports highlighting their child's developmental milestones.

Step 3: Petal has developed the Center for Families and Children where these programs along with many others are implemented. A library program, sponsored by The Petal Rotary Club from various grants and donations, delivers books to the home of all newborns every month for their first five years.

Step 4: Petal's Center for Families and Children offers parents assistance with CHIP/Medicaid enrollment along with other services offered through the centers social worker. This step also encourages parents to participation in volunteer projects. Centers are required to file parent sign-in forms from these.

---

[155] Similar to other states, the state's current TQRIS rating of Step 1 involves licensing the center with the State; this is currently being revised in the process for revising the TQRIS funded through state dollars

Step 3 of the rating system not only requires the criteria stated in Step 2 but also requires early learning programs to include weekly notes to parents describing the activities of the week with copies to be maintained on file. The center must also offer parental education training yearly and create a parental lending library that would be available to parents and guardians of children. This library would allow families to borrow books along with educational toys for children of all ages.

To reach Step 4, a center must establish a parent resource center and a parent involvement program, in addition to the criteria from the lower steps. The parent resource center must be located within the child care facility and function to provide a support system to parents to help them improve their parenting skills. At the center, parents are be able to pick up parenting and other brochures that provide information on the growth and learning of children.

The fifth and final step requires the center, in addition to meeting all of the previous criteria, to send monthly newsletters to parents and hold parent-teacher conferences twice per year. The newsletters must be distributed to all parents, and copies of the parent-teacher conference forms must be filed and signed by both the early learning educators and the parents.

Parents as Teachers Model

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an internationally recognized home visiting program to help organizations work with parents to promote children's health, safety, and education. The program emphasizes customization of services to meet individual child and family needs.[156] Through the use of RTT-ELC funds, the PAT model will be adopted to educate families/communities on the guidelines and systems. Funds will be used for developing resources, support for implementing the parenting Center model, child care for parents during these sessions, transportation as needed, and other services that will allow for the support of expanding the parenting centers to an additional 20 districts of Children with High Needs in the state.[157]

In addition, the technical assistance currently offered to families in participating early learning and development centers would be significantly expanded statewide with the help of RTT-ELC

---

[156] More information is available at http://www.parentsasteachers.org/
[157] Supported by subproject 14h

funds and will follow that of the national PAT model. The PAT program offers family support (supporting parents' roles in promoting school readiness and healthy development of children) and early education for children birth to age five. The town of Petal, Mississippi, adopted this model in 1993, resulting in improved results for families in the community. In addition, Petal's family resource center for the families and children provide an array of services – many through partnerships with others within the community for children and the adults who care for them. For example, the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, the child care resource and referral program, and the center's home visiting program are all located on-site. These combined services offer families meaningful assistance. Mississippi Building Blocks and Excel by 5 have provided promising practices for reaching families. These ideas will be consistent with national research and added as requirements for the revised TQRIS, the MS2S. We also plan to expand the current efforts with our existing partnership with the Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM).[158] Based on their extensive outreach and education to parents and communities in traditionally low-income communities, the MCM will provide additional support in the TQRIS revision to ensure the standards and design align with successful family engagement strategies.

(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an ongoing basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards

Current and Revised TQRIS Requirements for Staff Education and Training

Professional development is required for early learning educators to participate in any parental involvement programs. At Step 2 of the state's TQRIS, the director is required to receive additional training by approved training entities per Mississippi Department of Health (MSDH) child licensing regulations to exceed the required number for licensing by a minimum of five hours annually. Full-time teaching staff at these centers are required to obtain fifteen hours annually of staff development. This training should be given by approved training entities based on the child care licensing regulations. This training will be documented for each staff, with no allowable in-house hours to be counted in the required fifteen hours.

---

[158] Supported by subproject 3c

At Step 3, the director must hold a current Office of Children and Youth (OCY) Director's Credential, a credential approved by MDHS/OCY, or an associate or higher degree in child development, early childhood education, or a related field. Monthly staff meetings must be conducted and documented via sign-in sheets, minutes, etc. At least one staff member must hold a current Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) or a higher credential such as an Associate Degree in Child Development Technology or Early Childhood Education or a Bachelor's Degree in Child Development, Early Childhood Special Education, Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, or a related field. All staff members must be 18 years old and hold either a General Education Development credential (GED) or a high school diploma. Eighteen hours of annual staff development training are required by approved training entities per child care licensing regulation for staff with 10 hours of training specific to the age of child(ren) they are teaching or caring for.

At Step 4, the director must hold an Associate Degree in Child Development Technology or Early Childhood Education or higher degree, Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education with 18 credit hours in Early Childhood, Child Development, Elementary Education with 19 credit hours in Early Childhood courses. Fifteen percent of the staff has to have a CDA or higher degree/credential (Associate and/or Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Child Development, Elementary Education or related field). Twenty hours of staff development training are required by approved training entities per child care licensing regulations for staff with 10 hours of training specific to the age of the child(ren) in their care.

At Step 5, the director must hold a Bachelor's Degree or higher degree in Child Development, Early Childhood Special Education, Elementary Education or a related field. Twenty-five percent of the staff must hold a current CDA or higher credential/degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Early Childhood Special Education, Elementary Education or a related field. Twenty-five hours of staff development training are required by approved entities per child care licensing regulations for staff with 10 hours of training specific to the age of the child(ren) in their care.

The MS2S will include a requirement that participating childcare center directors and/or program supervisors must attend a six-hour introductory training on the Strengthening Families model.[159] The model, grounded in national research and evidence, recognizes the important role childcare providers play in building protective factors in families with young children. Each year, these trainings will be held throughout the state at four locations (possibly in the Northeast region, Delta region, Southwest region, and the Gulf Coast region) to provide multiple opportunities to attend the training. By 2017, we would like to have 75 percent of all eligible programs to have completed this training.

Petal's Birth to Five Model

The town of Petal's Birth to Five program has taken careful steps to ramp us the professional development and training of its early childhood educators. This program also requires home visits from birth until the age of three. Petal opened the Center for Families and Children, which houses a resource and referral center that has continued to bring much needed professional development and training into the community directly targeted to the early childhood community. Through this center, parents and guardians of children have access to the school district's social worker that can connect families with support services beyond the scope of the CCFC by assisting families with food, clothing, school uniforms, CHIP/MEDICAID, immediate medical assistance, temporary housing, among other types of assistance. With the help of RTT-ELC funds, this model will be expanded into at least 10 other Mississippi communities, with family and children centers being opened to support staff and families.[160]

Excel by 5

Excel by 5 is an innovative early childhood community certification process that focuses on the young children in communities. The program strives to support families with children ages 0-5 by encouraging community based collaborations to draw upon research-based best practices to use and enhance existing resources to optimize the care and education of young children by preparing them to enter school happy, healthy, and with the skills they need to succeed. This program is designed to improve a child's overall well-being by age five. Being the first of its kind in the United States, Excel by 5 emphasizes the important roles communities play in

---

[159] http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/
[160] Supported by subproject 3b

educating their children during their most formative years. Funding from the RTT-ELC grant will allow the state to expand the Excel by 5 program. We will be able to help more communities establish the coalitions and partnerships needed to become a certified early childhood community. Additional funding will also allow us to develop more resources for this program such as more information for parents and early learning educators.[161]

(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources, such as home visiting programs, family resource centers, family support networks, and other family-serving agencies and organizations, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers

Mississippi has several successful programs in place that have effectively promoted family support and engagement through a variety of means. This set of separate yet related initiatives (Healthy Homes Mississippi (HHM), Petal Parenting Center, Excel by 5, Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB)) will be coordinated by the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC), which will, with the help of RTT-ELC grant funds, oversee the scaling up and ensure alignment and consistency of these programs statewide.[162]

Healthy Homes Mississippi (HHM)

The (HHM) initiative is a home visiting program serving pregnant mothers and parents with children less than three months of age. This initiative is supported by the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development. HHM aims to link families to community services, provide child development, nutrition, and safety education. They provide material incentives such as cribs, car seats, and diapers, as well as emotional support and encouragement to parents. HHM works with community partners to develop a plan for the identification and recruitment of eligible families. HHM is being developed and implemented with consideration and advisement of community stakeholders including community/civic leaders, faith-based community organizations, business leaders, and consumer representatives.

The HHM program currently serves rural areas but, with the assistance of this grant, will eventually expand to create a statewide application.[163] HHM is currently active in engaging

---

[161] Supported by subprojects 7c and 14a
[162] Supported by subproject 7g
[163] Supported by subproject 14h

county level leaders, recruiting board team members such as field supervisors and support workers, developing training and curriculum materials, providing hand-out materials for families, purchasing electronics for implementation staff, and conducting interagency collaborations with Early Head Start, county health departments, and other available social service programs.

Petal Parenting Center

The Petal School District has been able to pull many of the child and family service systems together, relying on innovations in both the early childhood and the education system. Given that the district partners closely with the Head Start center and child care centers, alignment was more easily accomplished in these programs. The district also allocated funding to help pay for resources and training in all centers serving preK children. These programs access the curriculum and receive training in using Reading Street that helps to ensure a seamless reading transition as children move from preschool settings to the primary school. We plan to expand Petal's model and expand its methods throughout the state of Mississippi.[164]

Excel by 5

As the first of its kind in the United States, the Excel by 5 program emphasizes the important role communities play in educating their children during their most formative years. This program identifies gaps in community resources, encourages community collaboration and volunteerism, promotes economic development, and addresses children's needs with regard to education, health care, safety, and childcare. Children in these communities will be healthier and better prepared to begin their formal education at age 5.

Funding from the RTT-ELC grant will allow the state to expand the Excel by 5 program.[165] We will be able to help more communities establish the coalitions and partnerships needed to become a certified early childhood community. Additional funding will allow us to develop more resources for this program, such as more information for parents and early learning educators.

Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB)

---

[164] Supported by subproject 3b and 7g
[165] Supported by subprojects 6e, 7c, and 14a

MBB is a program designed to assist existing childcare centers in making improvements to their programs by improving teaching and learning in licensed child care centers, strengthening parenting skills, and improving school-readiness among entering kindergartners. MBB's vision is to provide statewide leadership in promoting excellence in early childhood programs and birth-kindergarten entry and to support children in their readiness for school. MBB works with early childhood professionals to improve the quality of their practices and programs by following its core goals.

With the help of the RTT-ELC grant, we will be able to help MBB expand its services by providing assistance to more child care centers. MBB will be able to establish more programs geared toward classroom quality while increasing the number of early learning educators who receive help improving their instructional practices. Also, MBB will be able to expand programs that seek to engage families.[166]

Table 2: High Quality Plan for Meeting Selection Criteria C

---

[166] Supported by subprojects 3a, 7a, 7b, and 10d

Section Criteria C

Aligned with "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform:

- Goal 1: Support Statewide Implementation of Early Learning standards that are aligned with K -3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi
- Goal 2: Expand state's Revised TQRIS system at scale to promotes quality improvements statewide and improve access to quality for high-needs children.
- Goal 4: Improve professional knowledge on the implications for child outcomes early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers on the statewide kindergarten entry assessment
- Goal 5: Integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system

	Lead Agency	Allocation of funding from RTTELC Grant	Allocation of funding from non-RTTELC funds	Alignment with Selection Criteria	
				C(1)	C(2)
Project #1: RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	SECAC	83%	17%	x	x
Project #2: Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	MDE	100%	0%	x	
Project #6: Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	MDE	81%	19%	x	x
Project #7: Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	SECAC	79%	21%	x	x
Project #8: Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	MDE	64%	36%	x	
Project #9: Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	SECAC	94%	6%	x	
Project #10: Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	MDE	78%	22%		x
Project #11: Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	MDE	72%	28%		x
Project #12: Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	MDE	64%	36%		x
Project #13: Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	nSPARC	21%	79%	x	x
Project #14: Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	SECAC/ DHS	45%	55%	x	x

D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

Improving the overall quality of early childhood programs is important for all children, but research indicates it is critical for children from low income families because of the existing achievement gaps between these children and their more affluent peers. Access to high quality care can improve cognitive, social-emotional, and overall academic performance. Mississippi is home to the highest number of children in poverty; therefore, we are committed to meeting the goals of this application in improving the professional development and workforce training to help move forward with providing the highest quality care to the children most in need. Mississippi plans to align the Community College work with that of the Institutions of Higher Learning, centralize professional development training to ensure consistency, and scale up many of our already successful programs like Excel by 5 and Mississippi R&R centers. Through online training, mentoring, scholarships for early learning educators, and alignment efforts, early learning educators will have multiple pathways to career training and certification.

(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials

Mississippi's early childhood workforce is the key to improving the quality of early childhood experiences for Mississippi's young children. When Head Start programs began to be required to increase education levels in their workforce and allowed to spend Head Start resources to finance the attainment of that goal, Mississippi's Head Start workforce slowly made improvements in education levels system-wide. Child care remains a service financed primarily by parent-paid tuition fees which remain low in order to keep services affordable for working parents. The Department of Human Services (MDHS) has invested in scholarships for a small number of employees to attain a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). Once an early learning educator receives this credential, it is difficult to retain them as they often leave for higher paying jobs. Therefore, Mississippi has identified investment in the child care workforce as a primary goal in this application. Specific steps Mississippi has taken to accomplish the goal of developing workforce knowledge and competency in early childhood are listed below.

Surveys conducted by MDHS over the years confirm that Mississippi's child care workforce want higher levels of education in early childhood. This is evidenced by the fact that scholarships made available by MDHS for the CDA are fully utilized every year, and there is always a waiting list of workers. Mississippi Building Blocks enrolls early learning educators into the CDA program every year with a scholarship and a $2,000.00 stipend upon completion. Early learning educators are fully engaged in participating in this incentive-based program to reach higher levels of education. Recognizing this demand, the Mississippi Community College Board moved to embed the CDA requirements in their Early Childhood Curriculum. Early childhood professors met early in 2013 to develop the specifics for incorporating the CDA requirements into the Associates Degree curriculum in early childhood available on community college campuses across the state. Additional work within the Institutions for Higher Learning are planned to help enhance a career ladder for early learning educators to move forward with their education as well as to lay the foundation for higher wages.

The field of early childhood education is growing steadily. This field provides not only opportunities for early learning educators but also room for upward mobility into administrative positions. Each of the occupations listed below in Table 1.1 are projected to grow by large margins (MDES, 2013).

Table D(1)-1: Current and Projected Occupation Report[167]

Description	Jobs, 2008	Projected Jobs, 2018	Change (Number)	Change (Percent)	Average Yearly Earning
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	2,530	2,970	440	17.4	$71,990
Preschool Early Learning Educators, Except Special Education	3,680	4,570	890	24.2	$24,490
Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	2,180	2,720	540	24.8	$40,990
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	13,460	17,000	3,540	26.3	$41,510

---

[167] Source: Mississippi Department of Employment Security; www.mdes.ms.gov (accessed March 18, 2013)

(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes

Mississippi's professional development system has been created, and the plan includes efforts to continue improving workforce knowledge and competency frameworks. The plan for improving workforce knowledge and competency starts with the collection of data and creating deliberate efforts to review the effectiveness of various strategies designed to improve the quality of and access to professional development. Multiple studies conducted to date provide insight on education, compensation, personal demographics, workforce supports, professional development needs, and turnover in the field. These data have been used to design strategies to promote system wide improvements in education, compensation, and retention over time.

The Mississippi Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework includes Professional Standards, Career Pathways, Articulation, Advisory Structure, and Data Analysis. These are the statewide standards that include the knowledge and skills necessary for early education professionals to care for and assist young children in licensed care.

Embedded in the state's current TQRIS system is a career advancement pathway (defined by the quality step standards) for staff. The pathway is linked to a higher quality rating for the participating centers. Upcoming revisions to the QRS system will include standards for professional development, including evaluation of early educators, self-assessment, and individual professional development plans to help early learning educators to use the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework to enhance professional development and make significant gains in meeting higher standards.[168]

In 2010, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) approved an add-on certification for anyone seeking a preK teaching certification if they already hold a current K-6 certification. Courses that are required are: SPED for Early Childhood Development, Early Language in Literature, Early Childhood Methods, and Introduction to Early Childhood. Currently, all early childhood educators must annually participate in 15 contact hours of professional development training as per Mississippi Child Care Licensure requirements. Many topics offered are related to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. State Early Childhood Advisory

---

[168] Supported by subproject 5b

Council (SECAC) developed a career ladder for early care and early learning educators with a career advancement compensation method. This is being piloted in many of the technical assistant models, such as Mississippi Building Blocks, Allies for Quality Care and Partners for Quality care.[169]

Moving forward in 2014, Mississippi will continue to improve the workforce knowledge and competency framework. SECAC will lead and work with all state agencies, including MDE, Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Mississippi Department of Health (MSDH), Mississippi Head Start Collaboration Office, and nSPARC, to align the improvements to the workforce knowledge competency framework with the state plan and goals of this application.[170] Under the direction of SECAC, the workforce committee will continue to meet and utilize the Workforce Competency Blueprint to fully develop the NAEYC standards related to data analysis.[171] Additionally, they will develop and implement a mechanism for inputting career related information into the LifeTracks system. A template will be developed to collect data on the changing early childhood workforce with regard to the increase in professional development relating to credentials and/or degrees.[172]

Plans are in place to expand the technical assistance and incentives to early care centers to help fully engage educators and provide information about the workforce competency framework for entry into the career ladder.[173] The state has a plan to implement a career ladder structure with specific recommended compensation levels that will be phased in over the next four years.[174]

In the first year of the grant SECAC will develop a committee of early childhood educators representing community colleges and universities and other organizations that certify early learning educators in the state. The purpose of the quarterly meetings is to review new trends and information specific to the early education field for the purpose of determining the appropriateness of any additions or deletions in course content and to determine how programs can be more efficient in the use of shared faculty across colleges and universities. Additionally

---

[169] Supported by subproject 8d
[170] Supported by subproject 8a
[171] Supported by subproject 9a
[172] Supported by subproject 13b
[173] Supported by subprojects 9a, 9b, 10a, 10b, and 10d
[174] Supported by subprojects 8a and 8d

this group will continue working with four-year university faculty to review the community college workforce competencies as a basis for comparison of competencies outlined in the NCATE and NAEYC standards for early childhood for four-year degree programs.[175] After conducting a cross walk between standards, the committee will develop a plan to improve curriculum alignment between the two-year community colleges and four-year universities.[176] Data from periodic workforce studies will profile education, compensation, and retention. Additional standards will be added to the new QRS system-MS2S requiring evidence on education attainment and growth.[177]

In year 2, the SECAC workforce committee will develop strategies for including this content in the courses required of students in an early childhood/child development degree program and present a report to the Council by the end of year 2 of the grant. In years 3 and 4, a plan will be developed to implement an Early Childhood Technology A.A. Degree/Child Development B.S. Degree.[178] This plan will result from a collaborative effort among the SECAC Workforce chair, the Institutions of Higher Learning Board, and the Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges.

The Maryland Core of Knowledge and Workforce Competency Standards provides an excellent model for using various levels of training and development to help teachers move forward up the career ladder based on the standards. North Carolina has also fully aligned the community college courses with those of the 4-year institutions. These state Workforce Competency Standards will help inform how SECAC will work closely with Community Colleges and Institutions for Higher Learning, and all key stakeholders will implement research based practices during the revision process of the Mississippi Workforce Competency Standards. We also plan to engage both states to seek their assistance with implementation and lessons learned as we plan for this growth and change in the Workforce Competency Framework.[179] Mississippi is committed to aligning Workforce Competency Framework for early childhood educators. The strategies will move forward with or without the RTT-ELC award.

---

[175] Supported by subproject 9b
[176] Supported by subproject 9b and 9c
[177] Supported by subproject 5b
[178] Supported by subproject 8b
[179] Supported by subproject 1e

It is important to note the membership of the SECAC council as it relates to Workforce Development. The current membership reflects vast experience and expertise and has committed a lot of work to date. Representatives of early childhood education, advocacy groups, parenting, all state agencies, Head Start, and early childhood directors and educators all collaborate as a council to produce best practices in the field of early education. They have been working on workforce development and will continue to do so. The SECAC Workforce Committee has already started the process of the implementation of a birth to 5 teaching certificate through an add-on endorsement to the one recently approved for preK to K.[180] SECAC Workforce Committee is also working with the teacher certification office at the MDE to integrate the add-on requirements into current University courses.[181]

SECAC is committed to the vision of one coordinated system of quality care and education for Mississippi's children birth to five. Through interagency collaboration SECAC will work to develop a stronger early childhood infrastructure built on existing early care and education systems and components to ensure coordinated service delivery at the community and state level for all of Mississippi's young children. There are many challenges to fully implementing the State Plan for Early Education, and we recognize the challenges in revising the Workforce Competency Framework. The rural nature of our state and the need for true understanding of poverty present challenges that we must overcome to build and revise the system. With the leadership of every agency supporting these efforts, the legislature passing historical education reform last year, and the Governor's office / SECAC serving as the lead agency, all the essential elements to creating significant and lasting change are now in place. RTT-ELC funding will expedite the mission, but these changes will move forward regardless of additional funding.

(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework

The Workforce Development Committee of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) has been working for the past several years on the development and implementation of a seamless career ladder for early care and early learning educators with compensation tied to

---

[180] Supported by subproject 8e
[181] Supported by subproject 8f

credentials. The SECAC developed a career ladder for early care and early learning educators with a career advancement compensation method. This effort is being piloted through the Allies for Quality Care Project at the Mississippi Center for Education Innovation and involves 70 child care early learning educators in Hinds and Rankin counties. Among the recommendations that are currently being in use or in planning stages are: higher standards for early learning educators, implementation of the state's current TQRIS measurement tool, technical assistance materials in classroom teaching, and comparability of wages between early care and early learning educators with public school teachers/assistant teachers in kindergarten to 3rd grade.

SECAC's Workforce Development Committee will focus on developing a career lattice that connects education attainment with career positions, professional development, and incentives or compensation.[182] The proposed career lattice uses as a basis the programs and degrees offered currently in early childhood education by eight accredited institutions of higher learning in the state and expands it to include Early Learning Standards and Core Competencies. See Appendix D for a copy of the state's early learning educator career lattice.

This matrix is compiled having in mind a career pathway for beginning professionals who wish to advance their degrees, acquire additional training, be promoted in higher positions, or improve their financial outcomes by choosing early childhood education and care. The career lattice reflects opportunities available in licensed child care and Head Start programs in addition to other roles that support family engagement, higher education, and community-based training. The career lattice includes five accomplishment levels, with details on education attainment, training requirements, career opportunities, incentives, and professional recognition.

These levels are:
1. Vocational or High School Graduate, for entry-level professionals who meet the basic standards to enter the field and have acquired state training and early learning credential
2. Associate Degree, for professionals who complete approved college credits in early childhood education or related fields, have acquired state training, and have met the state's requirements for reading, math, and writing

---

[182] Supported by subprojects 8a and 9d

3. Bachelor's Degree, for professionals who acquire a bachelor's degree with a specified number of college credits in early childhood education or related fields, have acquired state training, and have met level 1 of the requirements for credentials and quality assurance

4. Master's Degree, for professionals who earn college credits towards a Master's, have acquired state training, and have met level 2 of the requirements for credentials and quality assurance

5. Doctorate's degree, for professionals who earn college credits towards a Ph.D., have acquired state training, and have met level 3 of the requirements for credentials and quality assurance

Supporting training and degree attainment

The career ladder supports quality training and degree attainment in professional practice. Professional progress from one level to the next comes through a combination of training and educational accomplishments. In all levels of the lattice, state required training is reflected. This training will be offered through oversight of the SECAC workforce committee.[183]

Degree attainment is acknowledged at mid and higher levels of the career lattice. Emphasis is given on the required hours of coursework. Furthermore, the career lattice provides information on a credentials attestation system that takes into account assessments in all domains of Early Childhood Education. In addition, a tiered quality assurance system for the upper levels of education mastery includes teaching, research requirements, as well as general and special training. Professionals can be offered options regarding career advancement and accessibility to continuing educations courses, scholarships, conferences, etc.

Alignment of Proposed Career Lattice with Mississippi's TQRIS

Mississippi's current TQRIS program, Quality Stars, is the statewide quality care program addressed to licensed child care providers. The program will be substantially revised in 2014 and criteria for early childhood educators and directors will be included at all levels of the step process.[184] Similarly, the described career lattice is designed to take into account additional training for directorial positions, as well as a minimum completion of hours annually for staff

---

[183] Supported by subprojects 10a and 10b
[184] Supported by subproject 5b

development. Furthermore, the career pathway we propose involves credentials measurement and quality assurance evaluations that are in accordance with Environmental Rating Scales.

Next Steps

The career ladder will be implemented Year 1 of the grant (se Appendix D for the proposed Mississippi Career Ladder for Early Learning Educators). Participating agencies and other stakeholders will have the ability to contribute their modifications or additions in the first three months this is presented. Afterwards, the career lattice in early childhood education and care will be integrated into Mississippi's education system.[185]

(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework

Over the past years, the improvement of the education and skills of Mississippi's workforce and education development has been remarkable. Different entities have come together in order to share ideas for a common goal. Bridges have been built among various stakeholders and information is shared and developed. The focus is finally on a greater good for all Mississippians. Despite these important strides, Mississippi still has a lot to do in raising educational standards, increasing school readiness, or increasing coordination among educational entities in order to follow progress from preK through post graduate studies.

State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) conducted a survey to determine the capacity and effectiveness of Mississippi's 2 and 4 year public institutions of higher learning in the area of early learning educator preparation. The findings of this assessment demonstrated that presence and utilization of institutional articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and opportunities for practice teaching or internships for students in preschool settings are essential in workforce development. The implementation of the state's current TQRIS has also resulted in an increase in individuals working in non-Head Start Centers seeking to obtain a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA), since it is an identified criterion in the state's current TQRIS for a program moving up the system. The interest in

---

[185] Supported by subproject 8d

additional education has resulted in an interest in career ladder development and a new interest in compensation based on educational credentials.

To that end, certain programs or initiatives are working to enhance the quality of child care in Mississippi. Such programs are described briefly in section D(1)(a). Additionally, there are currently eight community colleges that offer an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education. Over one-half of Mississippi's Universities presently have a child development program approved by the Mississippi State Department of Education (MDE). These Universities have programs accredited by either the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences or the National Association of Young Children. Students who complete a Bachelor's degree program or higher from one of these programs may qualify for a preK to K license (endorsement) once they take the Praxis I (Reading, Writing, and Math) and Praxis II for child development.

The University of Mississippi is developing two new programs to prepare educators to address the critical needs of children ages 0 – 4.[186] The university will work collaboratively with MDE to:

1. Create an undergraduate endorsement in Early Childhood Education for current elementary education candidates. Candidates majoring in elementary education will complete 12-15 credit hours specializing in early childhood education in addition to coursework for the state approved elementary education certification. Working with MDE, the University of Mississippi will propose a new state certification area for preK – grade 3. Graduates of this new program will receive certification in K-6 Elementary Education as well as a preK – 3 specialty endorsement to provide the foundation and framework thereby creating new teachers with the background to enter both the elementary and early childhood classrooms. In addition, this program will provide elementary education candidates the knowledge base to effectively assist children not developmentally at grade level in grades K – 3. Each course will be divided into standards based modules and prepared for online/Internet-based instruction to allow early childhood professional development across the state of Mississippi. The goal is to be

---

[186] Supported by subproject 9b

able to provide the endorsement and its content to all community college and 4-year institution elementary candidates across the state.[187]

2. Create a Master's degree specializing in Early Childhood Education for current elementary teachers.[188] By enrolling in this Master's degree, educators will receive 15 graduate credit hours specializing in early childhood teaching and learning, creating a cadre of certified educators with the knowledge and skills to impact student learning in the primary grades. In addition, these current educators would be trained to assist school districts with the development home/parent programs to assist families with meeting the developmental needs of children ages 0 – 3. Our goal is to create a high quality preparation program that infuses 21st century technology with research based methodology that supports effective use of technology as a teaching and learning tool for children of all ages.

By creating these two new programs, the University of Mississippi will increase the number of quality educators that have the expertise to improve early childhood education in the state of Mississippi.

(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities

(a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities

As discussed in section D(1), Mississippi has come a long way in developing support for early childhood educators to help improve their knowledge, skills and abilities. In this current plan, Mississippi seeks to improve and expand professional development opportunities that have proven to improve student outcomes successfully.

Mississippi Workforce Advantage (Mississippi Grown Programs)

A best practice for allowing in-service early learning educators to increase credential and educational attainment is the Mississippi Workforce Advantage initiative. This groundbreaking initiative is a way to offer Mississippians opportunities that correspond to labor-market demands

---

[187] Supported by subproject 9a, 9b, and 9c
[188] Supported by subproject 9b

with multiple entrance and exit requirements that result in portable and stackable credentials for training and course-work. Through this initiative, Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Workforce Education (WE) work in cooperation to prepare present and future workers for high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand occupations in current or emerging professions. A stackable credential is a career or college certificate program that builds, or "stacks," with other certificate programs with the purpose of re-engaging adults in preparation for a credential and "next step" level employment. Through this collaborative initiative, CTE and WE curricula are developed in credit bearing course hours and in WE modules to provide statewide standards for awarding college credit for technical, industry-recognized certificates. The designated WE curriculum module's content articulates a specific number of college credits and aligns to all credit bearing course competencies. This allows current, in-service Early Childhood Education providers with flexibility in course and module completion in their effort to obtain TQRIS knowledge and skills or other related credentials. A secondary goal of Mississippi Workforce Advantage is to increase student and participant enrollment, participation, and completion of credit-bearing programs. Strategies to promote transition to and success within the credit-bearing program are essential to the goal of helping students earn credentials, certificates, and degrees.

I-BEST Model (best practice)

In addition to the Mississippi Workforce Advantage, five higher education institutions have implemented the Integrating Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Model in an effort to address the critical challenges facing employers to meet the fast-growing demand for qualified employees.

The I-BEST model is a path-breaking and proven approach to propelling underprepared adult and traditional learners to marketable credentials and good jobs. I-BEST's innovation is the integration of basic skills with technical training, facilitated by a team teaching model that incorporates up to 50 percent classroom overlap of a basic skills instructor with a technical or academic instructor. An additional student success factor in the I-BEST model is the wrap-around student support services provided to students as they complete their credential, certificate, or degree. After the completion of this program, students only master technical content but are better prepared academically in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Through this funding opportunity, the colleges can strengthen and expand implementation by incorporating

several evidence-based design enhancements: enrolling students in an early childhood education sector career pathway, enhancing transfer and articulation to ensure portability of credentials; and improving/expanding online learning opportunities for our rural childhood providers.

Online Learning (best practice)

Evidence strongly indicates that online learning is an asset to students because it increases access to college-level courses, particularly for hard-to-reach and low-income populations, and can accelerate course completion time. This is particularly valuable for currently employed early childhood workers who are offering services in rural areas throughout the state, since adults and working students often lack the flexibility for traditional course schedules. Online learning also has a lower upfront cost for course infrastructure, provides institutional flexibility, and offers efficiencies through online course registration and learning management.[189]

Credit for Prior Learning Experiences (best practice/MS Home Grown)

Mississippi students have the opportunity to gain college credit for prior learning or work experience through a process called Credit by Examination (CBE). CBE incorporates multiple national certification exams and state level exams. CBE is designed to help students demonstrate competence attained through workforce training and/or on the job experience. A student may complete a nationally recognized industry certification or a state-level CBE exam as a substitute for completing the usual requirements of a course.

Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MSCCR&R)

Administered by the Mississippi State University Extension Service, MSCCR&R complies with the state's current TQRIS criterion for training of staff in specific topics that are pertinent to the age of the child they teach as well as topics required by all staff. Information to parents is also a service provided by the sites. A library of educational materials and books are located at each site for parents and early learning educators to check-out for use in teaching their child skills specific to school readiness.

---

[189] Supported by subproject 10c

(b) Implementing effective policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) to promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathways

Mississippi offers coherent, high quality, and effective professional development and understands the importance this training plays in career advancement. In a rural state, offering statewide trainings provides challenges in delivery methods. Fortunately, there are many professional development models that include incentives that will be expanded to help more educators statewide. We know what incentives work and those that do not. Through use of results driven incentives of onsite mentoring, scholarships, and T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ implementation, an aggressive system of professional improvement is being developed.

Tailored Approach for the Mississippi Context

Mississippi is a state about people and relationships. The kindness of Southern hospitality is far reaching. In developing a comprehensive plan to create professional and effective workforce through the use of incentives and effective policies, it is the people involved that make it work. Pilot programs such as Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB), Allies for Quality Care, Partners for Quality Care, and Excel by 5 work hard to establish rapport with center staff and help recognize success of the people caring for our youngest children. Through the leadership of State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC), the strong support from the House and Senate for early education, and strong agency participation in combination with the data from the pilot programs, Mississippi has every opportunity to move forward with the comprehensive plan to create a statewide professional development system.

With legislative policy changes allowing state funded preK collaborations in Mississippi, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) was named as the lead agency to facilitate early childhood education in Mississippi. With this recent change, decisions have been made to move the professional development related to the proposed changes to the TQRIS to be better coordinated under MDE.[190] This will allow the alignment of preK to the K-3 system in a much

---

[190] Supported by subproject 1d and 10a

more meaningful way. The Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards were created through MDE, which will continue to serve as the lead agency for all professional development of the statewide system. Currently, professional development is all contracted out to various organizations. The state is committed to providing a more systematic approach to professional development, and the participating agencies have all agreed on this location. SECAC will serve as the lead agency in oversight of the professional development plan as it relates to the state plan for early education. It is important to note that this change will occur with or without the RTT-ELC grant funds.

Programs to promote professional improvement and career advancement

There are many programs that focus on various aspects of professional development already in use throughout Mississippi. The programs identified in this section are those that focus on expanding access to effective professional development activities that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, providing coaching and mentoring in a statewide approach, and linking effectiveness to child outcomes that have proven record of use of incentives.

Mississippi uses grant funds to promote quality enhancement programs in various parts of the state. Programs that focus on compensation and include recruitment strategies as well as quality improvement and retention follow:

Allies for Quality Care

The Allies for Quality Care program uses the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood scholarship program through funds allocated through the Department of Human Services. MBB also uses a scholarship incentive with a stipend of $2000.00 upon completion. Through RTT-ELC, these models will be expanded to reach more early childhood educators. The expansion model will target areas of need first in implementation of this compensation model. With the state's current TQRIS reimbursement rates, working with centers that serve a high number of High Needs students will serve as an incentive with a big impact in net gain for the center budget.

Additionally, SECAC will continue to work with the Workforce Committee to develop an incentive structure much like Delaware that pays stipends to educators through every step of the

movement through higher education. Since these areas need more highly qualified educators, the additional funding will serve as a recruitment and retention strategy.

Programs that focus on leadership, coaching for supporting professional, and effective educators are also currently conducted through grant funds and private sector donations. The state plan is to scale up these efforts to offer a more comprehensive, ongoing system of professional development to early childhood educators.

Mississippi Building Blocks

MBB provides on-site, classroom-based mentors that provide year-round instructional support and assist early learning educators in implementation of best practices. This includes direct instruction with children on language and literacy as well as mentoring early learning educators on language and literacy best practices. Hours provided are based on early learning educator need as identified by the fidelity checks and language checklists at different points in time conducted by supervisors and mentors. The focus of the MBB intervention is on the use of the MBB approach and the quality indicators as described in the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R) and the incorporation of the Early Learning Standards as adopted by the MDE. The mentoring recommendations are in accordance with the Mississippi Department of Health's Child Care Licensing Regulations.[191]

Mentors perform the following:
- Assist the early learning educator in conducting assessments of children and using results to inform lesson plan activities and instruction based on student need
- Assist early learning educators on small group instruction as a means for teaching language and literacy
- Implement the Between The Lions (BTL) curriculum daily within each preschool classroom
- Assist early learning educators in writing weekly lesson plans based on BTL curriculum and aligned with the Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards
- Assist in room arrangement improvements based on ECER-R scores

---

[191] Supported by subproject 10b

- Develop phonological awareness centers as an additional center in the room
- Create a reading center and word wall and include all BTL children's books (approximately 30) within the classroom to fully implement the BTL literacy program
- Assist early learning educators in learning to ask higher level questions and how to have meaningful communication with children on a daily basis
- Conduct daily mini meetings to highlight early learning educator strengths and weaknesses and areas for further development specific to language and literacy
- Conduct small group early learning educator meetings to discuss language and literacy best practices and create local cohorts of learning
- Compile daily notes on progress of early learning educator and students and reported to supervisor for analysis

Additionally, all MBB classrooms have the following benefits:

- Classroom Materials - Approximately $3,000 of materials and resources are provided to each classroom. The selection of materials and resources is determined by a needs assessment based on ERS scores.
- Scholarships - Scholarships are provided to early learning educators at participating centers.
- Assisted early learning educators obtain the CDA certification and possible associate's degree in child development.
- Upon completion of the courses or CDA, early learning educators will receive a $2,000 bonus (to be paid in $500 installments over 2 years).
- Parent Education - Parent advocates provide education services to families that address children's growth and development as well as families' involvement in their children's education.
- Home visits and monthly meetings.
- Business Consulting advisors provide counsel to directors/bookkeepers on financial management and related business practices.

Mississippi will provide this on-site, job-embedded leadership coaching to all participating centers over the course of the grant period. The expansion of the Allies for Quality Care program

and the Partners for Quality Care Program will enhance the outreach of these highly effective training models. MDE will provide oversight of the system of professional development to ensure that all programs, especially those serving High Needs students, receive the highest level of on-site training and development.

(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention

Mississippi is well positioned in terms of existing data systems and infrastructure. Memorandums of Understanding are already in place so that the ongoing work with preK data will continue to assist in making policy decisions for young children. In 2004, Mississippi launched one of its most significant initiatives to promote data sharing across state government entities. The purpose of this initiative was to create a system that would reveal how early outcomes influence later outcomes as individuals travel through their educational and workforce pathways. Specifically, Mississippi created one of the most comprehensive state longitudinal data systems (SLDS) in the country, commonly known as LifeTracks.[192] The philosophy behind this system was that if something cannot be measured, it cannot be managed effectively. Indeed, one of the state's biggest issues was not a lack of resources but rather less-than-optimal management of its limited resources.

With LifeTracks, Mississippi established the ideal framework for data sharing and partnership building across all early childhood, education, and workforce sectors. As part of the process of institutionalizing a performance-based approach, the state legislature created an SLDS governing body and committed funding for LifeTracks as the means for promoting performance-based initiatives in the state across all sectors. The board is comprised of policy-makers, stakeholders, and individuals who can make informed decisions aimed at reducing duplication, aligning resources, and forging sustainable partnerships to deliver high quality services. Within the LifeTracks framework, the state has worked with all early childhood stakeholders, including the Department of Health, Department of Education, Division of Medicaid, Department of Human Services, and Head Start. The state has mapped out all programs and corresponding data elements and data structures across agencies. Mississippi sees LifeTracks as a critical and

---

[192] https://lifetracks.ms.gov/SitePages/Home.aspx

efficient way to promote, maintain, and sustain access to high-quality ELD for all children, particularly those with High Needs.

Currently the state is in the process of completing the seven essential elements of an early learning data system:

1. Unique statewide child identifier. Mississippi has developed a procedure to assign a unique identifier so that children can be linked as they move from one program to the next. The identifier is also used to link children to specific sites/programs and teachers/staff. The early childhood component will be directly linked to LifeTracks (K-20 into Workforce).

2. Unique statewide early childhood educator identifier. The state has developed a protocol to create a unique identifier for this group. LifeTracks is now designed to see how many students from two- and four-year colleges become part of the early childhood workforce and the center/program. LifeTracks will also provide metrics on professional development outcomes provided through either community colleges or other eligible training providers

3. Unique program site identifier. LifeTracks is designed to assign unique identifiers to programs so that they can be linked to children and programs.

4. Child and family demographic information. The data clearinghouse for LifeTracks includes child and family demographic information that will be included in the early childhood physical data model accessible through the LifeTracks one-stop portal.

5. Early childhood educator demographic information. For some programs (e.g., Head Start), the data clearinghouse for LifeTracks includes data on educational attainment and state credential or licenses held, as well as professional development information. As part of this grant, this data collection effort will be expanded to all programs.

6. Program-level data. The data clearinghouse for LifeTracks currently includes limited data on the program's structure, quality, child suspension and expulsion rates, staff retention, staff compensation, or work environment from the current quality rating system. At the end of the grant funding period, the data clearinghouse will include all these elements.

7. Child-level program participation and attendance data. The data clearinghouse for LifeTracks currently includes limited early childhood program data that are not currently linked to other LifeTracks data elements. At the end of the grant funding period all data will be linked.

The data will be structured so that the state will be able to meet reporting compliance, identify best practices, and support continuous improvement. There is also consensus among stakeholders that an early childhood data system be developed around key questions to guide practice, research, and policy. Some key questions are planned to include:

- In which communities are children more vulnerable to being "at-risk" of school and future success?
- Is the early education and care workforce meeting the quality standards required?
- What strategies and investments lead to a skilled, stable, and effective early education and care workforce?
- What is the percentage of educators are at each level of the career ladder?
- What is the percentage of educators attaining a new level of the career ladder?
- What professional development training is most effective at improving student outcomes?

Reports

Access to agreed upon pre-defined reports will be through the LifeTracks one-stop portal. Statewide, aggregate reports will be publicly available. Access to sub-state level reports will be role-based, and roles will be determined by the data contributors. De-identified individual data points will never be part of pre-defined reports and will not be accessible through LifeTracks.

Ad hoc Requests and Reports

Reports or requests for information outside pre-defined reports (ad hoc requests and reports) can be requested via an online request system available through the LifeTracks portal.

(d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for–

1. *Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework*

2. *Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework*

With the incentives built into the system, these are ambitious but achievable goals. We have the following goals for 2014-2018:

- By 2018, 50 percent of early learning educators working in licensed child care settings will have a two- or four-year degree in child development or early childhood education or have a bachelor's degree in another field with at least 12 credits in early education and will be receiving a stipend to pay the higher salary as a result of completion.

By 2022 every lead early learning educator working in licensed child care setting will have a two- or four-year degree in child development or early childhood education or have a bachelor's degree in another field with at least 12 credits in early education and a salary structure in place to provide ongoing career ladder salary schedule aligned with the k-12 system. Although we realize this target is outside the grant period, we want to include our overall state goals as a reflection of commitment to improving the early learning educator workforce and sustaining it after the grant period ends.

Table 3. High Quality Plan for Meeting Selection Criteria D

Section Criteria D					
Aligned with "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform: • Goal 1: Support Statewide Implementation of Early Learning standards that are aligned with K -3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi • Goal 3: Promote consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities for all Mississippi early educators to improve instruction for early learning programs					

	Lead Agency	Allocation of funding from RTTELC Grant	Allocation of funding from non-RTTELC funds	Alignment with Selection Criteria	
				D(1)	D(2)
Project #1: RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	SECAC	83%	17%	x	x
Project #3: Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	MDE	72%	28%	x	
Project #4: Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	MDE	95%	5%	x	x
Project #7: Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	SECAC	79%	21%		x
Project #8: Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	MDE	64%	36%		x

Project #9: Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	SECAC	94%	6%		x
Project #10: Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	MDE	78%	22%		x
Project #11: Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	MDE	72%	28%	x	
Project #12: Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	MDE	64%	36%		x
Project #13: Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	nSPARC	21%	79%	x	x
Project #14: Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	SECAC/DHS	45%	55%	x	x

Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(1): Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework

	Baseline (Today)	Target - end of calendar year 2014	Target - end of calendar year 2015	Target - end of calendar year 2016	Target – end of calendar year 2017
Total number of "aligned" institutions and providers	15	16	18	21	24
Total number of Early Childhood Educators credentialed by an "aligned" institution or provider	398 per year	498 per year	598 per year	698 per year	748 per year
Baseline data are based on actual numbers. Data are based upon aligned institutions and MSCCR&R data provided in Table (A)(1)-10 and (A)(1)-11.					

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry

(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness

One of the major components of the Early Education and Collaboration Act of 2013 was the inclusion of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment that would be implemented across the state effective school year 2014-2015.[193] (See Appendix B, Request for Proposals - PreK Early Learning Collaborative 2013-2014 Awards.) The assessment will focus on language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches toward learning, physical well-being, and motor development, and social and emotional development. The implementation of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment provides the State with one of the last components needed to enable LifeTracks, Mississippi's longitudinal data system, to track the development of Mississippi's children from birth to career.

Currently, a statewide initiative to choose an assessment that meets and matches the most stringent of national and state standards is in its final stages, and final selection of the assessment will be made public prior to December 2013. The assessment selected will be used to gather information on the child's overall development and to specifically assess the readiness of each student for kindergarten based on the Early Learning Standards serving Four-Year-Old Children. Additionally, Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines[194] will be utilized to help early care providers and program administrators meet the challenge of providing quality care for young children by providing a framework to incorporate all of the early childhood theories and practices emphasizing environments, curriculum, activities, and assessments that meet the needs of all children. Using the guidelines as a template to inform instruction, early learning educators

---

[193] Supported by subproject 11a
[194] https://districtaccess.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculumandInstruction/EarlyChildhood/4-year-old-guidelines.pdf

can more adequately identify individual needs and learning styles, connect instruction to specific benchmarks, provide developmentally appropriate supports, and encourage programs to facilitate learning for all children, including those with special needs and English language learners. The proposed assessment will be used in all pre-kindergarten programs participating in all Early Learning Collaborative beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, and projected to be given to 100 percent of the state's children by the end of the grant period.

To facilitate the implementation of the assessment, the state plans on implementing a training program that trains early learning educators on the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Training early learning educators on the assessment will help promote a successful transition to kindergarten, via linking the instruction in the early learning classroom with the requirements of kindergarten entry.[195] Upon completion of the initial training phase, early learning educators will be given instructional aids (practice activities, formative assessments, and instructional blueprints) and technical assistance (in-center, online, and on the phone) to help answer any questions that might arise or identify and help correct problems with instruction.[196] Additionally, early learning educators will be given an electronic gradebook program that records data focused specifically on early learning educator data (attendance, accumulated training hours, training frequency, training topics, number of hours or technical assistance given, and virtual lesson plans by essential domain), student data (attendance, amount of correspondence with parents or guardians, formative assessment scores, remedial assessment scores, benchmarks, special needs (health, accommodations, or otherwise), and current progress to meeting the minimum standards for kindergarten entry. The gradebook will be maintained as one of the Early Childhood Development components of LifeTracks, the State's P-20W longitudinal data system.[197] Formative reports will be generated by LifeTracks bi-monthly for each child to ensure that children are progressing at a developmentally appropriate level that helps ensure their kindergarten readiness.[198] These reports will also serve as the initial step to identifying instructional or developmental problems, bringing attention to areas where changes or remediation could potentially improve child outcomes.

---

[195] Supported by subproject 12c
[196] Supported by subproject 12a
[197] Supported by subproject 13c
[198] Supported by subprojects 13 a and 13e

(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities

Mississippi is not creating its own assessment but has elected to choose a pre-existing assessment that aligns with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards for Four-Year-Old Children.[199] Due to its preexistence, the selected assessment must provide documentation of valid scoring procedures for all assessments and will document any standard-setting or norming activities; bias, reliability, validity, or usefulness studies; or any other relevant research studies conducted on the assessments and include the outcomes from those studies in the technical documentation provided. The documentation should reference procedures and guidelines followed such as Universal Design and the most recent edition of Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing published by the American Education Research Association. The technical documentation should include but is not limited to: the supported purposes, test development procedures, validity, reliability, accommodations and testing of students with special needs, security, administration, scoring, equating, scaling, standard setting/norming, reporting, and appropriate use and interpretation of test data. In addition, the assessment must be accompanied by psychometric item information (i.e., Item Response Theory, IRT parameters) and appropriate analyses on the items in order to support the system's validity, reliability, and developmental appropriateness.

Although the selected assessment is required to provide documentation that it is a valid and reliable measure for kindergarten readiness, independent evaluations will be conducted across all children in each learning collaborative who complete the assessment. Evaluations include the following:

Internal Consistency for all domains via Cronbach's coefficient alpha

Based on general guidelines for acceptability[200], alpha coefficient will be set at .07. Any collaborative with any domain falling below an alpha level of .07 will be evaluated at the center

---

[199] Supported by subproject 11a

[200] George, D., & Mallery, P. (2003). SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference. 11.0 update (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

level to account for scores at any center that may be extremely low and skewing the collaborations' results.

Inter-rater Reliability

Subject matter experts, external to the state, will be selected to evaluate the different items in each domain and assess how well each item prepares students for the rigors of the kindergarten curriculum. Each subject matter (i.e., content) expert will rate on a 5-point Likert type scale, with 1 representing that the question does not prepare the child for kindergarten at all and 5 representing that the question prepares the child for kindergarten very well. Experts' ratings will then be evaluated against one another via analysis of variance (ANOVA). Any questions shown to have significant ratings will be scrutinized; the experts will be questioned about why they rated the question the way they did; and a decision (either to keep the question, remove the question, rewrite the question, or replace the question) will be made by the lead partner for each collaborative.

Content Validity

Each set of domain questions will be compared to no less than three existing scales of measurement that have been documented as being valid instruments for its respective domain. Pearson's product moment correlations will be utilized to measure the amount of similarity between the different domain measures. Any set of domain questions on the selected assessment not shown to have a statistically significant positive correlation with at least two of the other measures will be critically scrutinized question by question to evaluate any outlying question that may not adequately represent the domain it was written to assess.

Developmental and Cultural Appropriateness

Additionally, the chosen assessment will be evaluated on the adequacy of testing and instructional materials and plans for accommodating special populations (i.e., English language learners and students with disabilities) as well as how it aligns with the National College and Career Readiness Standards for these populations[201] [202].

---

[201] http://www.corestandards.org/assets/application-for-english-learners.pdf
[202] http://www.corestandards.org/assets/application-to-students-with-disabilities.pdf

(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of the school year ending during the fourth year of the grant to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation

Initial testing will be mandatory for all students in centers funded by the Early Learning Collaborative Act beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. Other childcare providers can elect to participate in the assessment and must follow the same testing standards and guidelines as the collaboratives. A baseline projection for participation in the first round of assessments is 30 percent of the state's children, with an aggressive four year improvement plan to significantly increase the percentage of participants each year until all children in Mississippi are taking the preK assessment - 100 percent compliance by the end of the grant period.[203]

Despite the financial hardships that have plagued the nation and the state since the recession[204], Mississippi's commitment to ensuring a high quality early education for all its children has endured. The initial funding window of three to five years for the Early Learning Collaborative Act is a testament to the focus and dedication that the State has regarding the education of Mississippi's children. Thanks to the recommendations from Blueprint Mississippi[205], the Mississippi Economic Council's plan for increasing the opportunities for the people of Mississippi, and educational innovations driven by early initiatives in the private sector[206] [207], the Early Learning and Collaborative Act should produce benefits well into the future, surpassing the initial funding timeline of the initiative and increasing the State's commitment to early childhood education for years to come.

Making the Most of Available Funding

However, the state's plan is not without its challenges. The first phase of the initiative will be allocated $3,000,000 in funds from the state government. These funds will be provided to the early learning collaboratives on the basis of $2,150 per student in a full-day program and $1,075 dollars per student in a half-day program. Since the amount allotted per child is lower than the

---

[203] Supported by subprojects 6d, 6f, and 12b
[204] http://mepconline.org/
[205] http://www.msmec.com/blueprint-mississippi
[206] http://www.excelby5.com/about-us
[207] http://www.msbuildingblocks.com/mx/hm.asp?id=MBBQUICKFACTS

average cost of childcare in a licensed center, a system of matching funds has been set up to help offset this cost at a ratio of 1:1. Funds may include local tax dollars, parental tuition, philanthropic contributions, in-kind donations to facilities, and equipment and services required as part of the program such as food services or health screenings.

Although the current plan includes the addition of a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment, there is currently no assurance that the curriculum and instruction given to the children are properly teaching the necessary critical thinking skills and competencies necessary to be successful at the kindergarten level and beyond. To remedy this situation, the Early Learning Collaborative Act has implemented, as part of each early learning collaborative, a lead partner that manages the pre-kindergarten program. The lead partner serves as the fiscal agent for the collaborative and ensures that the collaborative adopts and implements curriculum and assessments that align with the comprehensive Early Learning Standards. Agencies electing to become lead partners must provide evidence that they have the instructional expertise and the operational capacity to manage the early learning collaborative's pre-kindergarten program. Examples of lead partners include public school districts and local Head Start affiliates, licensed private and parochial schools, or current high quality licensed child care centers.

Another challenge to statewide quality child care is the high level of rural dwelling families across the state. Over half of Mississippi residents live in rural areas.[208] This high percentage causes a unique problem for both parents and childcare providers alike, with respect to access and resources.

Phased Implementation By Improving Parental Engagement

There is a lack of awareness by parents and communities about what a quality program should look like. Parents tend to use "word of mouth" rather than services from referral agencies to select child care. This can often result in parents' not having access to information that could help them make more informed decisions.[209] Quality care is not a top priority because there is only a limited number of providers available. Many parents will push quality lower on their priority list and substitute convenience. Parents often prefer family, friend, or neighbor care for several

---

[208] http://www.raconline.org/states/mississippi/
[209] http://www.naccrra.org/sites/default/files/default_site_pages/2012/rural_top_concerns_070910.pdf

reasons, including trust, culture, cost and proximity. Parents do not like the idea of having to send their child to a "city" center where their rural culture and values may not be represented in the program. Transportation is also a major issue for rural parents. Parents sometimes need to travel as far as 10-15 miles away for child care. Due to the length of commute, parents need earlier pick up and later drop off times. In rural areas, there is a greater need to provide transportation to and from school for school-age children. It is difficult for families without a car or with only one car that is used for commuting to get children to a child care setting. Parents commuting to a larger city have to leave very early and get home late. When public transportation is available, it is often only on the main routes to the large cities, and buses may run only once every two to three hours. Buses are usually not available during second and third shifts.

One of the most substantial benefits of the learning collaboratives as outlined by the early Learning Collaborative Act is that no one center will be working in isolation. This plan will help address many of the rural issues that impede the sustainability of a high quality childcare system in rural areas through a unified effort:

- Through the use of learning collaboratives, information to parents about the different centers will be provided, including the quality standards that each center must maintain; the educational, safety, physical, emotional and social requirements that each center must follow as outlined in the Collaborative Learning Act; and the importance of high quality education that can be streamlined and distributed to rural families. Due to the collaborative effort associated with getting the informational materials to rural communities, it allows the centers to engage in follow-up communications in which they engage the families directly (open houses, community fair, public broadcasts on television, and radio call in shows) and respond to the parent's comments and concerns.
- With individual centers, the prospect of providing transportation was too costly to consider. However, with a network of centers, bus or van routes can potentially be a viable option due to the combining or pooling of funds and resources. Central drop-off and pick-up points can be established and communicated to the parents, and route maps can be distributed to parents, highlighting the route that the driver takes to and from the center(s), the locations of drop-off/pick-up points, and a time schedule of when the drop-offs and pick-ups are made.

- The money provided by the state should help offset some of the costs faced by many of the providers who, had it not been for financial difficulties, would have opted to be high quality providers. The incentives proposed in the new TQRIS will give additional funding to centers selecting to be part of the State's high quality early learning plan. Percentages of these funds will go to the recruitment, training, and retention of highly credentialed, well qualified staff for each center.

In addition to overcoming the foreseeable challenges that the State will face implementing the current plan, efforts are being made to continually improve the plan throughout its development:

- The adoption of Early Learning Standards by the State Board of Education that address the highest level of fundamental domains of early learning, which will include but are not limited to: physical well-being and motor development, social/emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, and cognitive and general knowledge.
- The implementation of a research-based curriculum that is age appropriate, based on the findings of current research, and has been found to be effective in improving student learning.
- Utilizing innovative approaches and strategies for aiding parents and families in the education and development of pre-kindergarten children.
- Coordinate the services provided to and across the state's pre-kindergarten programs.[210]

(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws

Data gathered from the assessments will be collected and placed into LifeTracks. LifeTracks, Mississippi's statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS), is a statewide project in Mississippi that has been collecting and storing data since 2009. The broad goal of the national initiative funded through the U.S. Department of Education is to develop, implement, and expand longitudinal data systems that link information from pre-kindergarten through the workforce to create better information for better decision making to improve student outcomes. Specifically, LifeTracks is designed to align the efforts of universities, community colleges, K-12 schools, and

---

[210] Supported by subproject 1d

early childhood education in terms of academic standards and career expectations with the general intent of: (1) decreasing the number of high school dropouts; (2) increasing the number of high school students who graduate and enroll in and successfully complete a two- or four-year college degree; (3) increasing the number of students who successfully transfer from community colleges to universities; (4) increasing the number of four-year college graduates; (5) improving career-readiness at all levels of education; and (6) increasing the number of students who successfully gain employment. nSPARC coordinates activities for data sharing and reporting across all educational institutions in Mississippi and acts as a project manager and system developer for LifeTracks in Mississippi.

With regard to pre-kindergarten students, the Kindergarten Entry Assessment data will complete the early childhood component of LifeTracks. Specifically, joint efforts between nSPARC, MDHS, and Head Start have allowed for information to be gathered and data entered into the LifeTracks system to allow the development of Mississippi's children to be tracked from 0-4 years of age. With the inclusion of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, Mississippi, via LifeTracks, will have an even more comprehensive early childhood data tracking system that includes a greater portion of the state's children.[211] The assessment data will make possible a one-to-one comparison of critical domain skills across students and regions in every corner of Mississippi, as well as provide feedback regarding areas in the state with the greatest need. This feedback will assist funding agencies in allocating their funds to areas where their contributions and resources will make the biggest difference.[212] Moreover, this component allows lawmakers to make informed policy decisions based on comprehensive metrics from early child care through entry into the workforce.

A benefit of having an active SLDS for the past four years is the ease of which new data can be integrated into the system. Mississippi plans to expand the Early Learning Development component of LifeTracks to accommodate information from the proposed electronic gradebook in order to inform agencies at the state, local, and center level on the developmental progress of the children in centers across the state.[213] The electronic gradebook gives the state the added

---

[211] Supported by subprojects 13c, 13d, and 13f
[212] Supported by subproject 13a
[213] Supported by subproject 13d

advantages of identifying and addressing instructional and developmental problems before they potentially affect the development of the children long-term, resulting in fewer children being given a label of developmentally delayed as well as yielding higher Kindergarten Entry Assessment scores. See Section E(2) for more details on LifeTracks and its important role in Mississippi's SLDS.

(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of ESEA)

The statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment gained initial funding from the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013, which allotted $3,000,000 for the first phase of the assessments' implementation beginning in 2014-2015.[214] The Act currently contains two additional phases with state funds doubling to match the doubling of students being served. The state has been committed to scaling up a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment using its limited state dollars because we believe in the critical role this assessment will have in helping us to better understand the transitions children make from their early learning experiences and their elementary school years. Even with the prospect of receiving a substantial investment from winning an RTT-ELC grant, we are still dedicated to relying on our own investments to achieve this important goal, since this goal was inspired by early learning educators and stakeholders across the state well before this application was released.

Additional sources of external funding will also come from the early learning collaboratives from a dollar-for-dollar match obtained through local tax dollars, federal dollars as allowed, parent tuition, philanthropic contributions, or in-kind donations of facilities, equipment and services required as part of the program such as food services or health screenings. With funding for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment coming from multiple different state, federal, and local agencies each year, the state of Mississippi is dedicated to the life-long development of the state's children and the plan for funding an ongoing Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies

---

[214] Supported by subproject 11a

Mississippi has developed and implemented one of the most advanced and innovative State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) in the country, commonly known as LifeTracks. LifeTracks includes all the elements prescribed by the America COMPETES Act and the recommended ten actions to support effective data use. The system is based on a data clearinghouse model where data stakeholders transfer data under MOU guidelines for safety and security and under rules and regulations as prescribed by the governing board created by state law. The system links data from K-20 through the workforce. The state is now in the process of developing the early childhood component of LifeTracks. As of today, the system includes data from multiple state agencies such as the departments of health, human services, and education, higher education and workforce agencies (all Participating State Agencies with this grant application), and Head Start programs (see Appendix A for their letter of support) and other early childhood data stakeholders. Every data element has been inventoried, and a data map has been created to identify common data elements across programs. This data inventory will be used to create a logical and physical data model that will be accessible through the one-stop portal. Data fields and tables have been organized so that information can be produced for children, families, qualifications and compensation for early childhood workforce, program and site characteristics, and community and regional differences.

An early childhood data map has been created to catalogue data elements that are captured by early childhood programs in Mississippi. It crosswalks each program to determine data elements that are common across programs (i.e., first name, last name, SSN). It has also been cross-walked with the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) and was found to have 224 common data elements. It is divided into eight entities with approximately 150 tables. The entities include child, parent/legal guardian, household, family home-care, center/provider, program, staff, and staff professional development. This data map is the foundation that was used to begin building the early childhood component of LifeTracks. Over 6,000 early childhood data elements are captured by programs currently.

The data will be structured so that the state will be able to meet reporting compliance, identify best practices, and support continuous improvement. There is also consensus among

stakeholders that an early childhood data system should be developed around key questions to guide practice, research and policy. Some key questions are planned to include:[215]

- In which communities are children more vulnerable to being "at-risk" of school and future success?
- Are Mississippi's children on track to succeed when they enter kindergarten and beyond?
- To what extent do children have access to high-quality early education and care programs throughout the state?
- Which programs and support services better ensure school readiness and later outcomes?
- Is the quality of services and programs improving?
- Is the early education and care workforce meeting the quality standards required?
- What strategies and investments lead to a skilled, stable, and effective early education and care workforce?

(a) Has all of the Essential Data Elements

LifeTracks includes all the America COMPETES data elements and is moving toward meeting all the data elements recommended by the Data Quality Campaign. Specifically, the state is in the process of completing the seven essential elements of an early learning data system:

1. Unique statewide child identifier. Mississippi has developed a procedure to assign a unique identifier so that children can be linked as they move from one program to the next. The identifier is also used to link children to specific sites/programs and teachers/staff. The early childhood component will be directly linked to LifeTracks (K-20 into Workforce).

2. Unique statewide early childhood educator identifier. The state has developed a protocol to create a unique identifier for this group. LifeTracks is now designed to see how many students from two- and four-year colleges become part of the early childhood workforce and the center/program. LifeTracks will also provide metrics on professional development outcomes provided through either community colleges or other eligible training providers

3. Unique program site identifier. LifeTracks is designed to assign unique identifiers to programs so that they can be linked to children and programs.

---

[215] Supported by subprojects 5d, 8c, and 14g

4. Child and family demographic information. The data clearinghouse for LifeTracks includes child and family demographic information that will be included in the early childhood physical data model accessible through the LifeTracks one stop portal.

5. Early childhood educator demographic information. For some programs (e.g., Head Start), the data clearinghouse for LifeTracks includes data on educational attainment and state credential or licenses held, as well as professional development information. As part of this grant, this data collection effort will be expanded to all programs.

6. Program-level data. The data clearinghouse for LifeTracks currently includes limited data on the program's structure, quality, child suspension and expulsion rates, staff retention, staff compensation, or work environment from the current quality rating system. At the end of the grant funding period, the data clearinghouse will include all these elements.

7. Child-level program participation and attendance data. The data clearinghouse for LifeTracks currently includes limited early childhood program data that are not linked to other LifeTracks data elements. At the end of the grant funding period, all of these data will be linked.

(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs

At the present time, each entity or program collects data following different standards. However, when the data are transferred to the state data clearinghouse at nSPARC, all data elements are standardized. Moving forward, the overall goal is to assist state agencies and programs to follow data standards as prescribed by the state data clearinghouse (nSPARC).

As part of the LifeTracks protocol, data from each entity are transferred to the data clearinghouse at nSPARC. Each file is independently managed and stored. nSPARC protects information in all forms, for which it is the custodian, and maintains a robust, proactive, and evolving information security program. This program protects information from a variety of threats and stresses the importance of multi-layer protection. Through staff orientation, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) certification, university information security certification, and regular staff meetings, each nSPARC staff member is aware of, committed to, and accountable for his or her role in the overall protection of critical and sensitive information.

nSPARC operates in a restricted access environment whereby only administrative and analytical staff have access to the data for management and analysis. Random security audits are conducted to maintain data and system integrity.

All data, regardless of the contributing entity, follow a strict protocol when being transferred to the statewide clearinghouse, nSPARC. There are four key steps: data collection; data verification and accuracy; data cleaning and formatting; and managing data. See Appendix E for a detailed description of this protocol.

(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data

At the present time, each entity or program collects data following different standards. However, when the data are transferred to the state data clearinghouse at nSPARC, all data elements are standardized. Moving forward, data will be placed into a physical data model following a standardized logical data model for data sharing across programs and entities.[216] It is proposed that programs will first align their data structures and formats within their agency within the first 18 months of the grant period. The remaining 2.5 years of the grant will be allocated to the design and implementation of a standardized statewide early childhood data structure. This would be accomplished through focus groups, roundtable discussions, and extensive research based on successes of other similar state data systems, and we will continue to engage our peer state network to incorporate identified best practices from the field in this new area of longitudinal state data.[217]

(d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making and to share with parents and other community stakeholders

At the current time, information is processed and produced by accessing data from multiple sources through the data clearinghouse. Normally, the turnaround time is between one day and

---

[216] Supported by subproject 13d
[217] Supported by subproject 1e

one week. Moving forward, data will be real time and easily accessible through LifeTracks.[218] The early childhood component of LifeTracks will be a unified system that integrates early childhood data across all agencies and will be available to a variety of stakeholders, such as parents, providers, community leaders, early learning educators, agency organizations, liaisons, government officials, and researchers, through an online data mart.[219] The following diagram demonstrates the flow of data from data contributors to inclusion in LifeTracks and its output to users of the system.
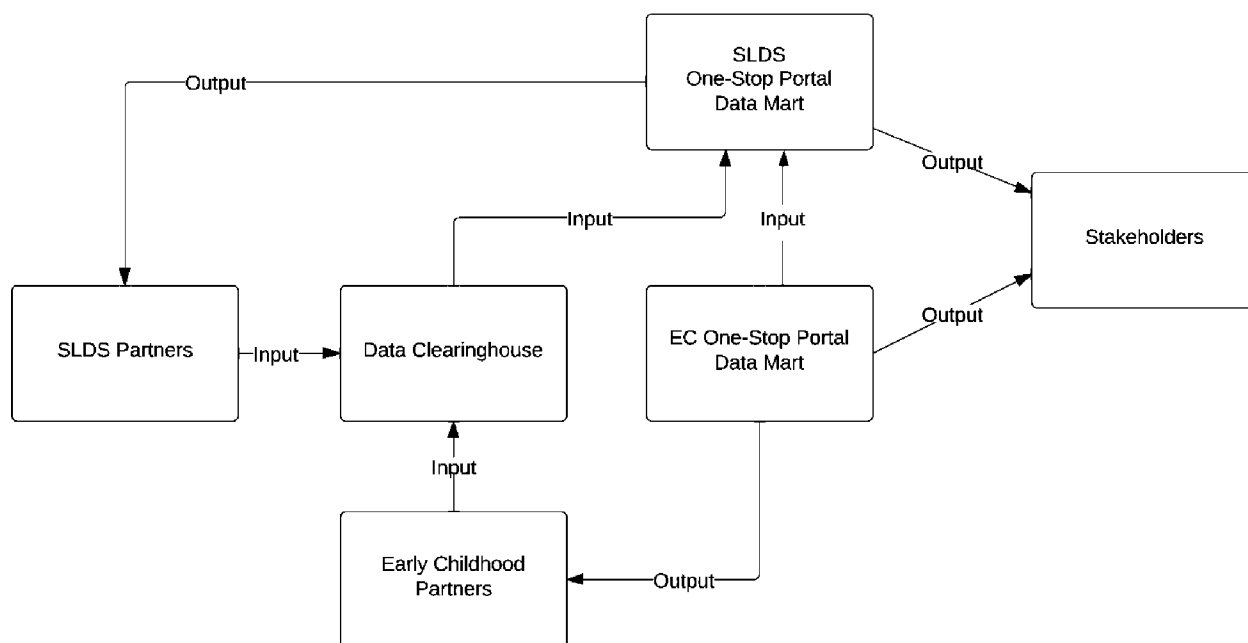
The governing board, State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC), will determine the frequency of data updates (monthly, quarterly, annually), which will likely be determined through extensive communication with each agency to ensure that data are current and relevant. SECAC will also decide users' permissions for the online data mart, with each stakeholder having limited access in regards to specific reporting purposes. The following table describes examples of system access.

Stakeholder	Data Access[220]

---

[218] Supported by subproject 13c
[219] Supported by subproject 13b and 13e
[220] Please see section below that discusses our strict enforcement of privacy laws for data access purposes

Parent	All aggregate level data
Child Care Center Early Learning Educator	All aggregate level data Individual level data for early learning educator's specific classrooms
Child Care Center Director	All aggregate level data Individual level data for provider's specific center and classrooms
Agency Organization	All aggregate level data All individual level data for the specific agency
System Administrator	All data across all entities

The comprehensive early childhood online data mart will serve several purposes. It will provide canned reports (a pre-defined report in the application menu that answers questions to commonly asked questions) as well as ad hoc reports. Examples of research questions we plan to generate from the system will encompass the following:[221]

- What is the number and percentage of children who receive child care certificates? Of those, how many are served full-time? How many are less than one year old?
- What is the number and percentage of children ages 0-5 who live in a single-parent household with a parent whose highest education level is less than a high school diploma?
- What is the number and percentage of Head Start students who required dental work beyond a routine cleaning?

The early learning SLDS can be used to inform policy and legislation, ensuring that resources are directed toward specific needs rather than lumped into programs that are ineffective. In addition, early childhood data are being used to breakdown negative connotations about the state of Mississippi. An independent study (see Appendix B and E for summary of findings) has been done regarding the "fade-out" effect of Head Start. Findings of the study indicated that in the state of Mississippi, Head Start is effective. Not only is it effective, but Head Start children often out-perform children in similar economic situations who did not attend Head Start and children in non-similar economic situations on 3rd and 8th grade state tests. This study, along with the

---

[221] Supported by subprojects 5d, 8c, 13e, and 14g

MHSA SRP, has gained Head Start in Mississippi national attention. Several states have shown interest in conducting similar studies and have contacted Mississippi to understand issues from data collection strategies to the effect on policy implications within the state.

The early learning SLDS will promote quality improvements and enhance the existing early childhood workforce network. Quality improvements include measures such as providing technical assistance to classrooms whose Environmental Rating Score (ERS) falls below a specified threshold; providing training to centers to move up in the revised TQRIS, MS2S; and allowing for the alignment of resources among programs.[222] The early childhood workforce network would become more robust through the link to the LifeTracks system by capturing early learning educator attendance, highest education level, certificates/credentials received, professional development/training, and employment.[223]

Funds from this grant will be allocated to create a streamlined application process whereby parents can utilize a single point of entry to determine eligibility for programs.[224] Currently, parents must visit each agency and fill out multiple forms for each program. Not only is this often confusing and frustrating to parents, it can also be an issue for parents who lack the transportation needed to get them from one agency to another. Research would be conducted for each early childhood entity with a thorough review of intake forms and essential documents necessary to determine eligibility for each program. Upon determination of all necessary information, a single online entry form (see diagram below) would be created that would automatically tell parents those programs for which they/their children qualify. Parents would still be required to submit proper documentation, such as birth certificates, pay stubs, and forms of identification to appropriate agencies and organizations, if needed. While it may be determined that some services cannot be part of this single online entry form, this demonstrates the ideal situation with cooperation from all early childhood entities. Consideration would be made for those parents who do not have online access in their home with mobile-formatted webpages or online registration centers such. Several options would be discussed, such as putting

---

[222] Supported by subproject 5d
[223] Supported by subproject 8c
[224] Supported by subproject 13b

kiosks in public places. These might include WIN Job Centers, County Health Departments, public schools, and public libraries.

Figure E(2)-1: Data Flow for Single Online Entry Form
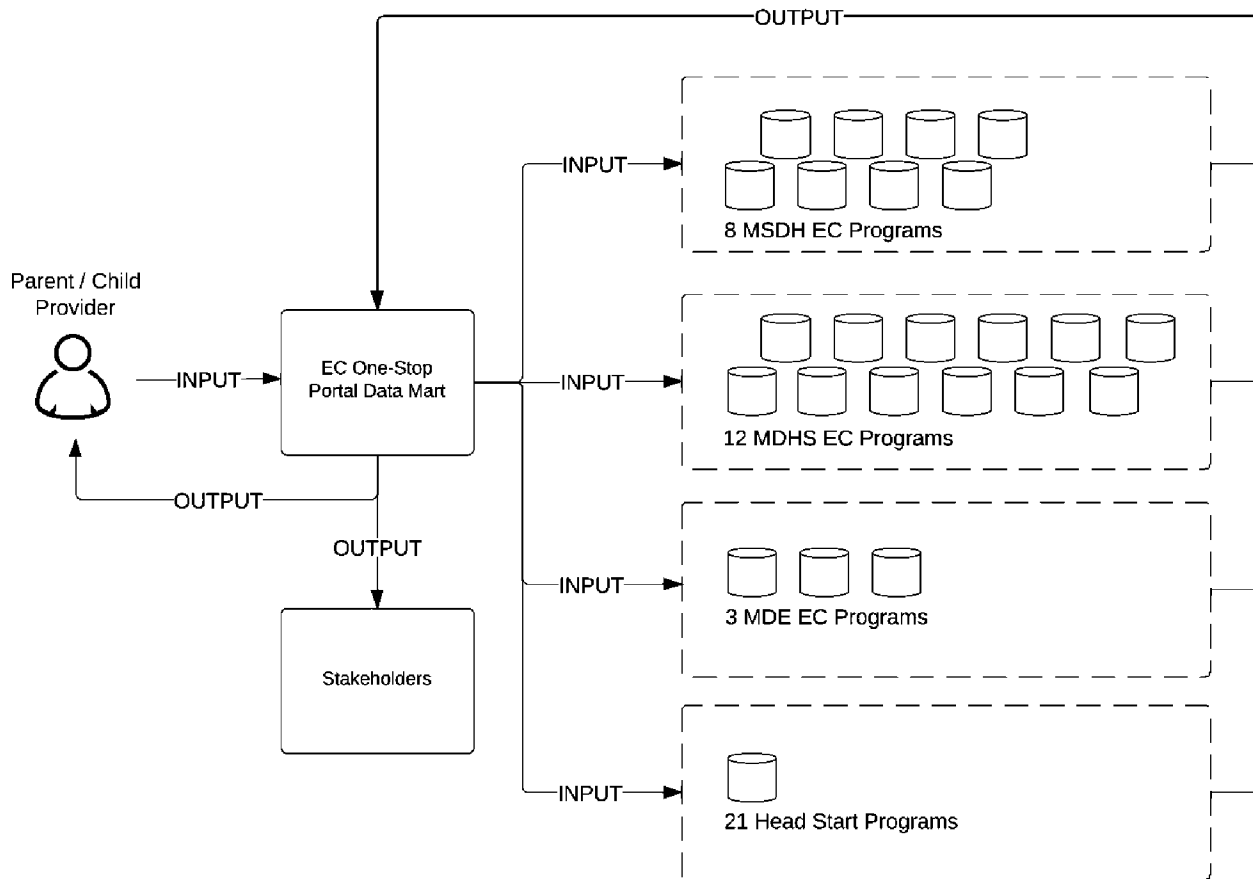
(e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws

The early childhood component of the LifeTracks system would comply with all current policies and procedures regarding Federal, State, and local privacy laws, as does the existing system. Mississippi has been well versed with the technical assistance provided by the USDOE's Privacy Technical Assistance Center and has followed all regulations regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). It would also follow the additional guidelines set forth by the governing board and follow the strict security protocol implemented by nSPARC in regard to micro-data. The early

childhood system will follow rules and regulations as specified within MOUs and by the governing board created by state law.

These rules and regulations cover data to be transferred to the state data clearinghouse, the data lifecycle, and analysis and reporting in regard to LifeTracks.

State Data Clearinghouse

The state data clearinghouse shall be a center of excellence and be an organization designed to increase flexibility, streamline resources, design and implement best practices for data integration and data security, and provide technical and scientific resources aligned with the scope and objectives of the SLDS. All data transferred for LifeTracks will remain at the state data clearinghouse in accordance with applicable policies and procedures.

The Governing Board shall ratify nSPARC at Mississippi State University as the state data clearinghouse.[225]

System Host

The Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (ITS) will function as the system host for the online portal (LifeTracks). No data will reside on ITS servers – only summary reports.

Data Scope

Data shall be transferred from data contributors to the state data clearinghouse that enable the goals set forth in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-154-1 (2013) to improve quality of life, education and employment opportunities for all citizens. This shall include all data transferred as part of the development of the system, all data required to meet the 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act (Public Law 110–69), and all data necessary to provide decision makers a tool to develop policies to support objectives, including but not limited to:

- Enabling Mississippians to secure and retain employment and receive better pay after completing training or postsecondary degrees;[226]

---

[225] Supported by subproject 13g
[226] Supported by subproject 8c

- Enabling Mississippi to meet the education and job skill demands of business and industry;
- Developing an early warning system, which allows the state to intervene early, improving the graduation rates in high school and college;
- Identifying teachers, teaching methods and programs that lead to positive student outcomes;[227] and
- Encouraging the sharing of electronic data across educational and other entities.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Memoranda of understanding (MOUs) should provide guidance to ensure the safety, security, quality, and integrity of data in a manner consistent with the requirements of the data contributor, acknowledging that nothing contained in the MOUs shall be construed so as to prohibit the SLDS Governing Board or the state data clearinghouse from using said data for longitudinal studies or other purposes as set forth in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-154-1 (2013). The Governing Board shall ratify existing MOUs between nSPARC and current data contributors and encourage the establishment of MOUs for all new data contributors. Should nSPARC no longer function as the state data clearinghouse as decided by SECAC, new MOUs would be executed between data contributors and the entity acting as the state data clearinghouse.[228]

The following table provides an overview of some of the agency programs that contribute data to the early childhood component of LifeTracks.

Agency	Program	Data Time Period	Data Transferred	MOU
MDHS	Allies for Quality Care	May 2011-July 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	CCPS (certificates)	2006-July 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	CDA Credential	January 2011-June 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	Mississippi Director's Credential	February 2012-June 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	MSCCR&R Market Rate Survey	May 2010-September 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	MSCCR&R PDTS	January 2010-May 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	Nurturing Homes Initiative	January-July 2013	Y	Y

---

[227] Supported by subproject 5d
[228] Supported by subproject 13g

MDHS	Partners for Quality Care	FY 2010-June 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	Project PREPARE	Oct 2010-August 2013	Y	Y
MDHS	Quality Stars	Oct 2006-August 2013	Y	Y
Early HS	Friends of Children of Mississippi	August 2008-May 2013	Y	Y
Early HS	Institute of Community Services	Aug. 2003-May 2012	Y	Y
Early HS	Pearl River Valley Opportunity	Sep. 2006-Aug. 2013	Y	Y
Early HS	Pinebelt Assoc. for Community Enhancement	Aug. 2011-May 2012 (demographics)	Y	Y
Early HS	Sunflower/Humphreys County	Aug. 2009-May 2012	Y	Y
Head Start	Bolivar County CAA	SY 2012-2013 Trans. 4's	Y	Y
Head Start	Coahoma Opportunities	SY 2012-2013 Trans. 4's	Y	Y
Head Start	Five County Child Development	SY 2012-2013 Trans. 4's	Y	Y
Head Start	Friends of Children of Mississippi	Aug. 2008-May 2013; SY 2012-2013 Trans. 4's	Y	Y
Head Start	Institute of Community Services	Aug. 2003-May 2012; Aug. 2002-May 2011 (assessment); SY 2012-2013 Trans. 4's	Y	Y
Head Start	Mississippi Action for Progress	SY 2012-2013 Trans. 4's	Y	Y
Head Start	Pearl River Valley Opportunity	Sep. 2005-Aug. 2013; Pike County 1999	Y	Y
Head Start	Pinebelt Assoc. for Community Enhancement	Aug. 2011-May 2012 (demographics); Aug. 2009-May 2012 (assessment)	Y	Y
Head Start	Sunflower/Humphreys County	Aug. 2004-May 2012; 2012 Community Survey	Y	Y
MSDH	Newborn Screening	Feb. 2000-Jan. 2013	Y	Y
MSDH	Immunizations	2010-2012	Y	Y
MDE	Kindergarten	2003-2012	Y	Y
MDE	LEA PreK	2003-2012	Y	Y
MDE	Part B Early Childhood SPED	2003-2012	Y	Y

In addition to the agency programs listed above, nSPARC is currently working to secure more data from early childhood programs, such as Prenatal Care, Perinatal High Risk Management/Infant Support Services (PHRM/ISS), Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring

Survey (PRAMS), First Steps Early Intervention, Women, Infants and Children's Nutrition Program (WIC); Children's Medical Program, Make a Child's Smile, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, and the Mississippi Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Program (MSLPPHHP).

Data Transfer

Data has been transferred from data contributors to the state data clearinghouse as necessary and in accordance with applicable MOUs on a regularly basis (ranges from weekly to quarterly). For those state agencies that submit annually (maximum allowed interval for data submission), data must be received no later than October 15 of each calendar year to ensure reports are adequately and accurately updated on the data portal.

For security purposes, data shall be transferred from data contributors to the state data clearinghouse through JSCAPE, an advanced secure file transfer management system. This managed file transfer solution employs industry standard file transfer encryption and includes the ability to assign private destination folders to each data exchange partner. The folders are locked down with and credentialed to individual source users such that they can only see their own folder. When files arrive in a JSCAPE folder, email alerts are generated and sent to the data manager so the input file can be transferred to a secure work area within the data clearinghouse system that is only available to authorized data analysis staff.

Each data contributor shall designate a data manager at the beginning of each state fiscal year and communicate this to the Governing Board Chair and the state data clearinghouse.

Data Inventory

Data will be inventoried via a business-oriented process that involves managing and tracking the flow of data assets transferred to the state data clearinghouse. Upon receipt of data, the state data clearinghouse shall communicate a list of fields received to the data contributor. Upon verification of the list of fields, tables, and relationships between tables by the data contributor, the data will undergo the complete data inventory process.

The data inventory process shall include the creation of data dictionaries and program data mapping documents. Data dictionaries will include metadata such as meaning, relationship to

other data, origin, usage, and format. Program data mapping documents will provide information on how data fields relate to other data fields across multiple data sets. The program data mapping document will be used to compare and contrast data elements collected across multiple agencies.[229]

Data Validation

Ensuring data accuracy is vital to public reporting programs. Data validation will be undertaken in accordance with the terms of applicable MOUs and through industry standard practices to ensure data meet or exceed documented acceptance criteria based on policies submitted to the state data clearinghouse by data contributors. The objective of the data validation process is to verify that data transferred by data contributors to the state data clearinghouse mirror data contributor internal data so that accurate reports can be produced across systems.

The data validation process entails individual data contributors working closely with data clearinghouse staff as part of a process designed to detect and correct inaccurate or incomplete records so that LifeTracks data will be consistent and reliable. Data validation diagnostics that ensure high-quality, accurate, and complete data are available for LifeTracks include but are not limited to:

- Checking that all tables, records, and fields, and the full contents of each field have been successfully transmitted and read;
- Comparing record counts between the source data and the data transmitted to the clearinghouse; and
- Producing a report with basic summary statistics.

Statewide Unique ID

The system relies on a 10-digit unique identification number (ID10). The ID10 will replace the social security numbers (SSN) and become the common link across all data in the system. As such, the SSN shall be part of the data transfer. The SSN will only be used for assigning the ID10. Other internal identification numbers shall remain as part of the transferred data to

---

[229] Supported by subproject 13c

facilitate the data validation and matching process and allows data contributors to use any information from LifeTracks for internal use.

The SSN will be replaced with a random but unique 10-digit identifier (ID10). The ID10 is a unique 10-digit number assigned to each SSN. Each ID10 value was created at random using a hardware based true random number generator that uses quantum physics to generate random binary data.

All de-identification procedures are implemented with appropriate physical, technical, and administrative protections in place to minimize risk and ensure regulatory compliance. Additional safeguards include only releasing information generated from the SLDS in tabular form and applying appropriate suppression techniques when cell sizes fail to meet minimum reporting requirements.

Data Security

In addition to the data safeguards in place for the data transfer process (see Section 4 above), all data transferred from data contributors to the state data clearinghouse are held in a secure file location that is only accessible by authorized state data clearinghouse staff. This access limitation is enforced by a combination of file access locks that includes Microsoft Active Directory credentials and an independent security system from Imperva Security Systems. The Active Directory permissions structure is used to only allow authorized users to see and work with the files. The Imperva system has independent credential settings that also guard access to sensitive file storage areas and provide robust augmentation of security provided through Active Directory credentialing.

Reports

Pre-defined Reports

Access to agreed-upon pre-defined reports will be through the LifeTracks one-stop portal.[230] Statewide, aggregate reports will be publicly available. Access to sub-state level reports will be

---

[230] Supported by subproject 13b and 13e

role-based, and roles will be determined by the data contributors. De-identified individual data points will never be part of pre-defined reports and will not be accessible through LifeTracks.

Ad hoc Requests and Reports

Reports or requests for information outside pre-defined reports (ad hoc requests and reports) can be requested via an online request system available through the LifeTracks portal. The eight-step online process includes:

1. Step 1: Anyone interested in an analysis of LifeTracks data that are not currently available through a pre-defined report can submit a request through the LifeTracks web portal. The outcome of this step is an email notification being sent to the data contributors and the state data clearinghouse noting that a request has been submitted.

2. Step 2: The state data clearinghouse reviews the request and assesses the data requirements and identifies the corresponding data contributor(s), determines how the data will be used, proposes an appropriate research design to be implemented, estimates a timeline for completion of the request, and notes the primary data contributor(s) who will approve or reject the request. These Step 2 assessments are added to the request file as part of the feasibility review. The outcome of this step is that a notification along with the feasibility report is sent to the primary data contributor(s) for review.

3. Step 3: The primary data contributor(s) reviews the request and the accompanying feasibility report (generated as part of Step 2). The outcome of this step is the approval or rejection of the request by the primary data contributor(s).

4. Step 4: If the request is rejected, the requestor is notified by email and provided with contact information for the primary data contributor(s) should the requestor like more details regarding the outcome of the request.

5. Step 5: If the request is approved, a notification is sent to the state data clearinghouse authorizing clearinghouse staff to undertake the analysis.

6. Step 6: State data clearinghouse staff conducts the analysis, produces a draft report, and makes the draft report available to the primary data contributor(s) for review.

7. Step 7: The primary data contributor(s) reviews the report and can choose one of three options: a) accept with no changes, b) request clarification, or c) request revisions and

resubmission of the draft report with changes. This process repeats until the report is accepted by the primary data contributor(s).

8. Step 8: The draft report is approved and accepted by the primary data contributor(s) and becomes final. The requestor, and all data contributors, are notified that the report is available for viewing on the web portal.

Review and Audit

These policies and procedures will be subject to review on annual basis with a report and recommendations for any actions to be made to the full board.

Table 4. High Quality Plan for Meeting Selection Criteria E

Section Criteria E

Aligned with "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform:

- Goal 1: Support Statewide Implementation of Early Learning standards that are aligned with K -3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi
- Goal 2: Expand state's Revised TQRIS system at scale to promotes quality improvements statewide and improve access to quality for high-needs children.
- Goal 3: Promote consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities for all Mississippi early educators to improve instruction for early learning programs
- Goal 4: Improve professional knowledge on the implications for child outcomes early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers on the statewide kindergarten entry assessment
- Goal 5: Integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system

	Lead Agency	Allocation of funding from RTTELC Grant	Allocation of funding from non-RTTELC funds	Alignment with Selection Criteria	
				E(1)	E(2)
Project #1: RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	SECAC	83%	17%	x	x
Project #2: Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	MDE	100%	0%	x	x
Project #3: Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	MDE	72%	28%	x	
Project #5: Improve the administration and quality of the state's TQRIS	MDE	56%	44%		x
Project #8: Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	MDE	64%	36%	x	x

Project					
Project #9: Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	SECAC	94%	6%		x
Project #10: Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	MDE	78%	22%	x	
Project #11: Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	MDE	72%	28%	x	x
Project #12: Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	MDE	64%	36%	x	x
Project #13: Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	nSPARC	21%	79%		x
Project #14: Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	SECAC/ DHS	45%	55%	x	x

Competition Priorities

Priorities 2, 4, 5 and 6

Invitational and Competitive Priorities

Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority – Including All Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Competitive Priority 2(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will determine whether an applicant has met this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities

In Mississippi, the Department of Health (MSDH) has all of the licensing responsibilities for the child care centers. MSDH licensing primarily focuses on ensuring that the child care centers provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for children. According to the MSDH, there are 1,612 child care centers that are licensed to serve 131,466 children in infant care settings all the way through after school. Head Start centers and licensed family child care homes are both included in the numbers.

The types of licensing requirements reviewed by MSDH include but are not limited to:
- Facility policies and procedures (such as parental access and the prohibition of weapons)
- Personnel policies (such as child care director and teacher qualifications)
- Record retention and reporting (facility records and child abuse)
- Staffing (such as child-teacher ratios)
- Program of activities (daily routines, eating and rest periods)
- Equipment, toys and materials (playground equipment, cribs and high chairs)
- Building and grounds (heating and ventilation, kitchens, exits)
- Health, hygiene and safety (employee health, child health, fire drills)
- Nutrition and meals (nutritional standards)
- Discipline and guidance (prohibited behavior, time outs)

- Transportation (restraints)
- Diapering and toileting (diaper area, hand washing)
- Rest periods (cleaning linens)
- Feeding of infants and toddlers (formula storage, bottle feeding)
- Swimming and water activities (lifeguards)
- Children with special needs (facility adaptation, activity plans)
- Night care (nutrition, sleeping and bathrooms)
- School age care
- Summer camp and school age children
- Hourly care

Mississippi also registers family day care homes caring for five or fewer children who are not related to the child care provider. The registered family day care homes are not licensed, monitored, or regulated, and only minimal information is maintained by the MSDH. Additionally, the following types of child care are exempt from licensure:

- Child care facilities providing respite care
- Vacation bible schools and camps lasting less than three weeks
- Any child residential home
- Any program in an elementary (including kindergarten) and/or secondary school system that is accredited
- Any Head Start program operating in conjunction with an elementary school system
- Any membership organization affiliated with a national organization that charges only a nominal annual membership fee, does not receive monthly, weekly, or daily payments for services, and is certified by its national association as complying with the association's minimum standards and procedures, including, but not limited to, the Boys and Girls Club of America, and the YMCA

Within the state of Mississippi, licensed centers have significant advantages over unlicensed centers in terms of access to resources and promotion and access to parents and marketing. For example, parents can search for licensed child care centers through the MSDH website; they cannot search for unlicensed family care homes. Also, to participate in the state's current TQRIS program and receive a rating, a center must be licensed by the MSDH. Only licensed centers

will have the opportunity to achieve bonus payments and technical assistance for providing care to child care certificate children within the TQRIS system.[231]

As previously described in B(1)(c), a partnership with the MSDH and the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) already exists in terms of sharing of information. Although the licensing standards are unaligned with the TQRIS standards, this is being addressed with both agencies, with active involvement from the directors of early learning centers across the state toward aligning Mississippi Steps to Succeed (MS2S) standards to those of the licensing regulations.[232] The state's current TQRIS standards require that programs implement annual assessment and screening and report twice annually to parents; however, the current licensure requirements do not address parental involvement order interaction. MDHS is committed to helping align licensing standards through active involvement of the stakeholder community as they relate to reporting to parents and providing updates on child assessments.

Mississippi licensing monitors will also all be trained on the MS2S and will receive ongoing opportunities to participate in training on the MS2S assessment tools.[233] Clearly, licensors are not responsible for assessing facilities; it is crucial that they have a working knowledge of the program assessment tools and how those tools build off of the current licensing requirements. In turn, MS2S monitors will be trained on licensing standards. Since licensing, MS2S, and quality improvements all go hand in hand, it is important that cross training occurs.

Improving the alignment of Child Care Licensing and the MS2S is a key priority for Mississippi in the upcoming year. Plans are in place to create a new data system for licensing monitors to utilize during inspections. The new system will allow the monitors to use a data system that is linked to the environmental rating scores. MSDH monitors will deliver the reports and explain initial results to center directors. This will create a greater degree of coordination for our centers so that they are interacting with the same state official for licensing and program improvement, which will improve the feedback and assistance provided.

---

[231] Supported by subprojects 6d, 7a, 7b, and 7g
[232] Supported by subprojects 5c, 6f, and 7d
[233] Supported by subproject 6f

Furthermore, Mississippi plans to update the Child Care Licensing Information system. The process of monitoring and licensing process needs updating to help the efficiency of the system. Currently, monitors visit the centers and handwrite the compliance reports. The use of electronic tablets will make an automated data process providing immediate feedback to the licensee and eliminate the slow handwritten/mailed in reports. A new system will allow parents to have access to early childhood provider demographic data, maps, compliance reports, and inspection history. Access to this information by all participating agencies and parents will increase transparency, helping families make the best decisions about their child's care.[234]

Currently, the Mississippi Resource and Referral office compiles a central registry for professional development. Data have been collected for several years in regard to trainings and education attainment early educators have obtained. To further this registry, nSPARC will also collect TQRIS and licensing data and track and manage all the educational accomplishments of the early childhood workforce.[235] This collection and tracking of all program data will help align all the program work to date and help inform policy related to existing licensed centers. The SECAC will continue discussions as to how this central registry can be used for better understanding the early learning centers and to help enhance existing practices or design better programs to improve student outcomes.

Competitive Priority 2(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate

Current Participation in Mississippi's TQRIS

More than 25 percent of the 1,612 licensed centers are currently participating in the state's current TQRIS. In fact, this number would go up to 35 percent, if we take into account the additional centers that are currently enrolled, making it from 415 participating centers to a total of 522 enrolled centers (data provided by ECI/MDHS, August 2013). The following table provides a snapshot of participation by Star Rating as published on the website of the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

---

[234] Supported by subproject 13e
[235] Supported by subprojects 13a and 13d

MISSISSIPPI

Rating	# of participating Centers
Star 5	9
Star 4	18
Star 3	35
Star 2	81
Star 1	272

Several years into the implementation of the state's current TQRIS, one out of four centers presently participate in the program. More centers have not yet signed up for the current TQRIS program for a couple of reasons. First, the program is voluntary, and in the absence of mandatory participation, participation will lag, particularly if the costs to the provider (time, reputation if a low star is earned) are seen as outweighing the benefits (reputation if a high star is provided and the quality bonus payments) in the judgment of a child care center director. Second, the cost structure creates barriers for centers to participate, particularly among centers that primarily serve low-income children that pay for child care through the certificate program. To fund as many slots as possible, the reimbursement rates for certificates are set at roughly 50-60 percent of the market rate. At the same time, a waiting list of several thousand children exists so a center that primarily serves low-income children may only have a portion of its slots filled. Due to cash flow limitations from this predicament, the center may not have the resources to make the necessary up front quality improvements to earn bonus payments.

A Plan to Increase TQRIS Participation

To address this concern, the state's current TQRIS is being significantly revamped to align the coaching, technical assistance, incentives, and teacher compensation systems to make TQRIS a much more attractive partnership for centers. Ultimately, by increasing the incentives to provide real support for early childhood educators, higher participation in the TQRIS program will occur and the quality of early education provided in Mississippi will increase system-wide.

In November 2013, the State will begin its process for a redesign of the current rating system and rebrand it as the Mississippi Steps to Succeed (MS2S). The contract with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute will support two main goals:[236]

1. Raising the quality and rigor of the MS2S standards and ensuring alignment with other components of the State early learning strategy
2. Providing significantly more professional development and technical assistance support to the early child care center directors and teachers so they are able to effectively and efficiently improve the delivery of their services

Although the system will continue to be voluntary for non-state funded preK centers, the new incentives offered will greatly enhance participation.[237] With the Office of Early Learning to be housed at the Mississippi Department of Education upon award of this grant,[238] full support for the public preK centers will be encouraged. We estimate by the end of the grant period, all the public preK centers will participate in MS2S. School based programs that serve developmentally delayed students will also be encouraged to fully participate in the MS2S system as well as Head Start centers. With the ideas of adding incentives such as materials for classrooms, scholarships for teachers, year round mentoring, and help with fees related to national accreditation, it is anticipated that Head Start centers and school based centers will fully engage in the process.

Mississippi's Early Learning State Plan is designed to ensure that all children who participate in programs are progressing to meet a common set of high expectations and that providers meet quality standards to care for children. The MS2S will be designed to include all licensed programs that choose to participate. Mississippi has the policy and the provisions in place for a system that fully integrates licensing and the MS2S into a comprehensive system for all centers. We have ambitious goals of building a system that covers a minimum of 75 percent participation by the end of year 4. This is achievable and will move forward as the new system develops with the revision of the state's current TQRIS. See Table B(2)(c) for the state's projected participation throughout the grant period.

---

[236] Supported by subproject 5b
[237] Supported by subprojects 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, and 6e
[238] Supported by subproject 1d

Priority 4: Competitive Preference Priority – Creating Preschool through Third Grade Approaches to Sustain Improved Early Learning Outcomes through the Early Elementary Grades

Competitive Priority 4(a) Enhancing the State's kindergarten-through-third-grade standards to align them with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards across all Essential Domains of School Readiness

Raising the Bar for Education Achievement

Mississippi has been committed to aligning our education standards from birth to college preparedness and have been recognized as one of the few states in the country to make advanced progress with such alignment. We realized that as a state, with many stakeholders passionate about quality education for our young children, we had to address the issue of a lack of alignment among our standards. For the last three years, Mississippi has been using state funds to align our standards, through multiple engagements with Mississippi educators, professionals, and researchers. Currently, we are less than nine months away from completing this three-year effort to address a previous reality of less than adequate education expectations.

The effort to significantly improve and align Mississippi's educational standards was kicked off by a taskforce of early childhood experts assembled to revise the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-year-old Children. The task force consisted of multiple stakeholders such as Mississippi public school teachers, university professors, Mississippi Head Start Office, Mississippi Building Blocks, Mississippi Children's Defense Fund, Early Childhood Education Providers, and Supporting Partners to Assure Ready Kids.

The Mississippi Three- and Four- year-old Early Learning Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) are divided by Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language strands based on the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards that are identical across all grade levels. These revised standards (completed in 2013) were developed to correlate to the CCR and follow the anchor standards in each strand. Each standard for Three- and Four-year-olds corresponds to the same-numbered CCR anchor standard. In some cases, there will not be a developmentally appropriate standard for a CCR anchor standard. The task force also completed

this alignment for the standards involving Mathematics and is organized by standards, clusters, and domains. Standards define what students should understand and be able to do as they progress through the education system. Clusters are groups of related standards. Domains are larger groups of related standards. Standards from different domains may sometimes be closely related. The Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Science, Physical Development, Creative Expression and Social Studies Standards were developed based on National Standards for Early Childhood Education.

We are currently undertaking the same alignment of essential domains of school readiness with our state's infant and toddler standards with expected completion in early 2014.[239] Once completed, Mississippi will be one of a handful of states with complete alignment among their 1) infant/toddler, 2) Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards, and 3) elementary school standards for learning to nationally recognized rigorous standards for learning.

Competitive Priority 4(b) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs from preschool through third grade, and building families' capacity to address these needs

Understanding the impact of the health of children in Mississippi has been a primary focus for a holistic approach to supporting a child's wellbeing and development. In order to support this important function of education, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) created the Office of Healthy Schools (OHS), restructuring and consolidating its health and safety-related programs under the umbrella of the OHS. Through the efforts of the OHS, MDE offers a system of coordinated health services to 152 school districts to assist them in developing organizations that make the connection between good student health, high academic achievement, and, most importantly, solid family engagement. In order to facilitate a coordinated approach to addressing the seamless education of health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs from preschool through third grade, the OHS provides a coordinated approach to the many programs and efforts to support our young children.

The OHS is committed and prepared to offer technical assistance and services to enable early learning centers, schools, and communities to create effective coordinated school health

---

[239] Supported by subproject 2a

programs based on the eight-component model developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

1. Health education
2. Physical education
3. Health services
4. Nutrition services
5. Counseling, psychological, and social services
6. Healthy and safe school environment
7. Health promotion for staff
8. Family and community involvement

The OHS also partners with several state organizations and associations to deliver and coordinate services and increase family engagement in the development, such as The Bower Foundation, Center for Mississippi Health Policy, The Behavioral Vital Signs, The Diabetes Foundation of Mississippi, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, Mississippi Department of Health, and Mississippi Public Broadcasting – just to name a few.

Based on this recent state coordination of efforts, Mississippi has embraced the tenets of supporting the holistic development of a child:

● Young children learn best when they are actively engaged with relevant, meaningful materials.

● Young children learn best through social interaction.

● Young children learn best when their emotional needs are met.

● Young children learn best when their physical development is supported.

The State Early Childhood Advisory Council of Mississippi (SECAC) will support MDE to provide oversight for collaboration of these initiatives and programs (see complete list in following subsection).[240] The SECAC will be the project director for the grant, and it has representatives from multiple state agencies including early education as well as elementary grades. The SECAC is in the best position to support MDE with the alignment and implementation of these programs and initiatives. Based on the RTT-ELC grant as described in

---

[240] Supported by subprojects 1a, 1d, and 7g

Section A, the SECAC has an existing dispute resolution policy in existence and has handled similar alignment strategies across multiple state agencies in the past.

As described in Section D, Mississippi will be aligning all of the professional development opportunities under the MDE. By centralizing these professional development opportunities, it will provide us with a better understanding of the impact on improving child outcomes from the various professional development programs offered within the state. Such alignment will allow the state to provide a more coordinated effort for actively integrating the state's newly revised early learning standards from 2013 (see Section B(1), Section C(3), and Competitive Priority 4 for more details), which describes how the integrated standards address the health, behavior, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs. Because we have now aligned our Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Standards with our K-3 standards, and because of the new alignment of our professional development opportunities with early learning educators and K-3 educators, we strongly believe that such standards on health and developmental needs will be better integrated into our educator and teacher workforce training.

Competitive Priority 4(c) Implementing teacher preparation and professional development programs and strategies that emphasize developmental science and the importance of protective factors, pedagogy, and the delivery of developmentally appropriate content, strategies for identifying and addressing the needs of children experiencing social and emotional challenges, and effective family engagement strategies for educators, administrators, and related personnel serving children from preschool through third grade

The development of collaborative partnerships will be critical in the implementation of teacher development and professional development programs. This collaborative can help create more improved strategies for educators, administrators, and other personnel. The following initiatives will help us train our state's early learning and elementary educators with programs and trainings that emphasize the balanced approach to supporting a child, beyond just cognitive or academic supports.

Mississippi Building Blocks

Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) is a program designed to assist existing childcare centers in making improvements to their programs by improving teaching and learning in licensed child care centers, strengthening parenting skills, and improving school-readiness among entering kindergartners. MBB's vision is to provide statewide leadership in promoting excellence in early childhood programs and birth–kindergarten entry and to support children in their readiness for school. MBB has a comprehensive professional development strategy for its educators, focusing on the developmental science for child development, ensuring developmentally appropriate content, and providing each educator specific strategies for identifying and addressing the needs of children experiencing social and emotional challenges. MBB utilizes several tools of assessment such as Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4), the School Readiness Assessment, and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschool (DECA). Outcomes of participating students has been gathered for five years now and will help contribute to the selection of a screening tool and assessment to be utilized within the new system. As discussed in previous sections, we plan to leverage this professional development approach to several additional communities servicing Children of High Needs.

Allies for Quality Care

The Allies for Quality Care program currently serves eligible, randomly selected child care centers located in communities serving predominantly Children with High Needs. The focus of this effort is to address the programmatic needs of child care centers through evaluation and intense on-site technical assistance. This program provides direct professional development assistance to participating centers such as:

- Mentors for at least 40 hours per classroom
- Needs assessments
- Introduction and training on the ITERS/ECERS evaluation process
- Full ITERS/ECERS evaluation
- Training and materials based on needs assessments and evaluation findings
- Developmentally appropriate and effective room arrangement and management
- Nutrition specialist to assist with menu planning and food purchasing strategies
- Business advisor to assist with financial management and budgeting

Although this program has only focused on a specific number of areas serving Children with High Needs in early learning centers, through this grant we plan to expand its outreach and services to other communities in order to support the early learning and elementary educators' understanding and strategies for identifying and addressing the needs of children experiencing social and emotional challenges. Because the scale up funds for Allies for Quality Care will be managed through MDE, we will be able to leverage and coordinate this program with other similar programs to provide a coordinated approach for professional development and training.

Pilot for Incredible Years®

The Incredible Years program is a set of three comprehensive, multifaceted, and developmentally based curricula for parents, teachers, and children, ages 0-12. The Incredible Years program trains teachers and parents in evidence-based, developmentally appropriate strategies to promote emotional and social competence and school engagement, particularly for children with social, emotional, and behavioral issues. The curricula can be implemented by schools, school districts, and related programs (including Head Start, daycare, and kindergarten) as curricula to better train and prepare teachers to meet the social and emotional needs of young children, particularly those experiencing social and emotional difficulties. Multiple randomized control trials of the impacts of the Incredible Years program have been conducted with high risk populations including Head Start (preschool) and schools with a high percentage of children living in poverty and culturally diverse groups. Research has shown that the program has substantially improved teacher and parent management skills, improved young children's social emotional competence and school readiness, and significantly decreased problem behaviors[241] [242]. The Incredible Years program evidence base is so robust that it has been chosen as a model "Strengthening Families" program by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), as an "exemplary" program by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and as a "Blueprints" program by OJJDP. We plan to pilot the Incredible Years program in select

---

[241] Menting, A.T., Orobio de Castro, B., & Matthys, W. (2013) Effectiveness of the Incredible Years Parent Training to modify disruptive and prosocial child behavior. Clinical Psychology Review, 33, 901-913.

[242] Raver, C. C., Jones, S., Li- Grining, C., Metzger, M., Champion, K., Sardin-Adjei, L., & Young, T. (2008). Improving preschool classroom processes: Preliminary findings from a randomized trial implemented in Head Start settings. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 23, 10-26.

Mississippi schools and districts to train teachers and parents on effective strategies to address the social and emotional challenges of all children, particularly those with High Needs.

Evaluating Results Through Data

Although we are excited about the number of initiatives proposed in this application that we currently have in place, as well as the scale up programs we are proposing, it is important to understand whether these programs have the desired effect. Using our LifeTracks longitudinal data system Mississippi has the unique ability to analyze the "fade out effects" for our children after the exit various early learning centers and enter the early elementary grades. For example, two independent studies have researched the "fade-out" effect of Head Start (see Appendix B for findings). Both studies found that in the state of Mississippi, Head Start children often outperform children in similar economic situations who did not attend Head Start as well as children in non-similar economic situations on 3rd and 8th grade state tests, when controlling for all other factors. We are fortunate that Mississippi has one of the most comprehensive preschool through workforce state data systems in the country, and we will leverage this system to study the best strategies for identifying and addressing needs of children experiencing social and emotional challenges from preschool through third grade.[243]

Competitive Priority 4(d) Implementing model systems of collaboration both within and between Early Learning and Development Programs and elementary schools to engage and support families and improve all transitions for children across the birth through third grade continuum

The Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 established Mississippi's first state-funded, preK collaborations on a phased-in basis. The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is responsible for the implementation of the legislation and administration of the program. In order to foster collaboration between the Early Learning and Development programs and the elementary schools, we emphasize the use of collaboratives, defined by a collaboration preK programs, Head Start centers, licensed childcare facilities, public, parochial or private schools to work together in developing and operating preK centers. This collaboration must be defined by forming and sustaining a stakeholder council called an Early Learning Collaborative and

---

[243] Supported by subprojects 13c and 13d

designating a Lead Partner, which can be a public school or other non-profit entity with the instructional expertise and operational capacity to manage a collaborative's pre-kindergarten program. The MDE will fund competitive awards based on evidence of existing strong local collaboration, capacity, commitment, need, and the ability to demonstrate enhanced outcomes for participating children. The purpose of the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 is to provide funding to local communities to establish, expand, support, and facilitate the successful implementation of quality early childhood education and development services. Along with managing and overseeing the program, MDE will also be tasked with specific duties in regards to the Mississippi preK legislation:

- Administer the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the voluntary preK program
- Establish monitoring policies and procedures that, at a minimum, will include at least one site visit per year
- Provide technical assistance to Early Learning Collaboratives and their providers to improve the quality of preK programs[244]
- Support the Early Learning Collaboratives with their attention to support families and improve transitions for children across the birth through third grade continuum within the Collaborative

The law also specifies that the MDE should evaluate the effectiveness of each Early Learning Collaborative and each preK provider. When a statewide kindergarten screening instrument is adopted by MDE to assess the readiness of each student for kindergarten, MDE will adopt a minimum score of program readiness that each preK provider must meet in order to remain eligible for preK program funds.

Competitive Priority 4(e) Building or enhancing data systems to monitor the status of children's learning and development from preschool through third grade to inform families and support student progress in meeting critical educational benchmarks in the early elementary grades

LifeTracks provides an ideal platform to enhance the state longitudinal data system to monitor the status of children's learning and development from preschool through third grade to inform

---

[244] Supported by subprojects 6a and 6d

families and support student progress in meeting critical educational benchmarks in the early elementary grades. This will be accomplished in several ways:

Kindergarten Entry Assessment Data Collection

Data on the upcoming statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessments will be collected to include information about the children, the program, sites, families, and communities. The children will be assigned a unique id in the same way currently assigned in LifeTracks. This will allow for the analysis of children's progress as they move through educational programs.[245]

Understanding Growth

LifeTracks can use benchmark data with subsequent assessments to create overall growth measures and subsectors of growth measures. LifeTracks will be able to measure absolute growth as well as relative growth. For absolute growth, it will be possible to determine if a student has made any progress between two sets of standardized assessments. For relative growth, LifeTracks will allow for the creation of student percentiles for the benchmarks as well as for growth. Those percentiles will be created to determine how a student's benchmark score stacks up against all students in the state and overall goals and objectives. This can also be done to determine how any given student fares in a program and in the immediate region.

A series of predictive models will be used to determine what factors will be more likely to promote or thwart development. Specifically, we will take advantage of the nested nature of the data to estimate a series of multilevel models so that we can determine fixed and random effects. In doing so, we will be able to better understand what educational efforts work best for a specific child. For each child, a matrix will be developed so that early learning educators and parents will be able to determine how much the status of a child depends on a program, site, family, and immediate community and regional characteristics. This will help to create an all-inclusive approach for promoting child development.

Role-Based Credentials for Data Access

With the appropriate role-based credentials, early learning educators will be able to access student-specific information and provide a general scorecard for the student relative to progress and potential for development. Early learning educators will also receive formal training on how

---

[245] Supported by subproject 13c, 13d, and 13f

to use and communicate to families the information regarding student status. There will also be training for educators on how to assess and evaluate data in order to develop strategic plans for helping children meet critical educational benchmarks.[246]

Engaging Families through Data

Families will be able to access aggregate or summary information about the programs their children attend. The online system will be interactive to provide key information such as the percentile score or range so the parent can ask appropriate questions about the progress their children are making.

Program Specific Access

LifeTracks will allow for the production of program- or center-specific and statewide reports to inform administrators and stakeholders about the quality of early education in the state, how their program or center fares in general and in comparison to others, and the areas in which they need to improve or are doing well.

Competitive Priority 4(f) Other efforts designed to increase the percentage of children who are able to read and do mathematics at grade level by the end of the third grade.

Mississippi has dedicated significant effort in the last five years to align services and standards between the preschool and the elementary grades. These efforts include aligning education standards and guidelines, implementation and professional development support for early learning and elementary educators for our statewide kindergarten entry assessment launching in 2014, and development of an early learning division within the Mississippi Department of Education to coordinate and align services. All of these strategies address the recommendations as articulated by the National Governors Association policy guide for early literacy.[247]

We fully understand, however, that aligned state standards and state agencies focusing on early learning efforts are not the only solutions to achieving sustained success for children's learning through third grade. Mississippi's approach embraces the well-researched concept that a lack of third grade proficiency must be addressed well before the child enters third grade, or even second

---

[246] Supported by subproject 13e
[247] http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/2013/1310NGAEarlyLiteracyReportWeb.pdf

grade.[248] [249] [250] Any approach or program that successfully increases a child's learning by the end of third grade must be designed to address the following four concepts:[251]

- Children must be ready to succeed when they get to school (cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically) before they can learn there.

- The gap begins at birth for children born with into health problems caused by improper development and care during pregnancy.

- The readiness gap continues between birth and kindergarten due to differences in children's resources and opportunities for physical, linguistic, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development.

- This readiness gap becomes an achievement gap and persists throughout the students' school experience beyond third grade.

In order to address this specific selection criteria subsection, we highlight current efforts that adhere to these guiding principles because of the prevalence of low income children that come from challenging environments. The following programs and initiatives address the traditional academic approaches to supporting a child's cognitive skills but also approaches this support by providing comprehensive professional development strategies for the early learning educators, engaging and educating parents, and providing nutritional education to support the child's health well-being. These programs also include home visitation programs due to the rural and poor economic conditions that many of our families face. Many of these programs are either sponsored or managed through the Mississippi Department of Human Services, allowing for an ease of access and referral to coordinate services:

Neighborhood School Readiness Teams

Neighborhood School Readiness Teams will bring together educators and administrators from child care centers, family child care, preschools, and elementary schools in those neighborhoods, as well as representatives from local government agencies and other community and faith-based

---

[248] http://www.aradvocates.org/assets/PDFs/K-12-Education/Reading-to-Learn.pdf
[249] Haskins, R. and Sawhill. I. (2009) Creating an Opportunity Society. Washington, DC. Brookings Institution Press
[250] Foundation for Child Development. (2006). "PK–3 Education: Programs and Practices That Work in Children's First Decade." FCD Working Paper No. 6: Advancing Pre-K. New York, NY
[251] http://ccf.ny.gov/KidsCount/kcResources/AECFReporReadingGrade3.pdf

organizations, to identify the needs of neighborhood families and to develop the relationships needed to effectively support the children and their families as they transition to kindergarten and beyond. The goal of this project is to sustain and increase neighborhood school readiness partnerships to support the successful transition of low-income, at-risk young children to kindergarten.[252]

Mississippi Building Blocks Model for Professional Development for Early Learning Center Directors

Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB), now in its 5th year of service to early childhood programs, educators, and directors, continues its work to improve children's school readiness. MBB is currently providing comprehensive mentoring to 400 classrooms located across the state. In addition, they provide business training for directors, classroom materials, and scholarships for teachers. MBB's reports show that the program has a positive impact on both cognitive skills and social-emotional development of children participating in the program as compared to the control group. Of particular interest is the finding that MBB appears to be most effective with children of greatest need. That is, children who are below 185 percent of poverty and live in single parent households have made the greatest gains on the School Readiness and Social/Emotional Assessments.

The Birthing Project

The Birthing Project is a grassroots, volunteer-led effort designed to improve birth outcomes of African-American and Latina women in several poor, rural counties in Mississippi. Eligibility is open to all pregnant women, and each woman who takes part in the program is paired with a "sister-friend" - a specially trained volunteer or professional who provides the mother with one-on-one resource support throughout the pregnancy and through the child's first birthday. Topics of support include child health and well-being, reproductive health issues, employment, and education options.

Healthy Start

The Healthy Start Program is an initiative of the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau. It

---

[252] Supported by subproject 12b

provides grants to project areas with high rates of infant mortality in one or more subpopulations. Grantees are required to implement five core service components (outreach, case management, health education, perinatal depression screening, and inter-conception care) and four core system components (consortium, local health system action plan, collaboration and coordination with Title V, and a sustainability plan).

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

This program is a parent-involvement, school readiness program targeting children age three to five. A trained home visitor, usually a former program parent, provides parents with a curriculum, books, and materials designed to strengthen their children's cognitive skills, early literacy skills, and social/emotional and physical development. The curriculum is developed by the National Program Office and corresponds to the academic school year. Home visits occur once a week.

Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a parent education and family support program designed to engage parents in the development of their children beginning at birth. PAT can serve families throughout pregnancy until the child enters kindergarten. A certified parent educator provides parents with information on the developmental stages of childhood and ways to guide their child's language development, intellectual growth, social development, and social skills through the various stages. Local agencies that serve parents and young children use the PAT program within their existing structure. There are mandated core components: home visits, parent group meetings, child screening (developmental, health, vision and hearing), and resource network. Personal visits are at least monthly and may be more frequent depending on the needs of the family. Implementing sites receive program support – including curriculum and training, scientific based research, evaluation and quality indicators – from the PAT National Center.

Priority 5: Competitive Preference Priority - Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas

The State will meet this priority based on the extent to which it describes:

> *(a) How it will implement approaches to address the unique needs (e.g., limited access to resources) of children in rural areas, including rural areas with small populations; and*
> *(b) How these approaches are designed to close educational and opportunity gaps for Children with High Needs, increase the number and percentage of Low-Income children who are enrolled in high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs; and enhance the State's integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services*

Mississippi is a largely rural State, with more than 50 percent of the state classified as rural by the Census Bureau. As such, a large percentage of our state's children face challenges similar to kids across the country living in rural or sparsely populated areas. In line with the available literature on rural child populations nationwide, young rural Mississippians have less access to high quality early education than their urban and suburban counterparts. Some of the underlying causes of this problem have been found to include lagging infrastructure, poor education resources, and shortage of early learning educators and providers. These deficiencies disintegrate rural communities into areas where childhood education gaps expand and education performance diminishes. The evident gap in educational readiness among school children in general, and early education children in particular, can be narrowed with actions devoted to improving alignment and integration across the pre-kindergarten to early elementary grades. Our state is determined to close the opportunity and educational gaps that exist for Mississippi's rural population.

Nearly 100 percent of Mississippi's low-income students live in concentrated poverty districts. The difference in spending in rural districts with high rates of concentrated poverty compared to rural districts in general is very little. For example, the rural instructional spending per pupil in Mississippi is $4,168 and is only 3 dollars higher ($4,171) in districts with concentrated poverty

within the state.[253] According to the data, less than four percent of all children in Mississippi are served by Head Start, the federal program that promotes school readiness of children ages birth to 5 from low-income families.

Table 5. Early Childhood Development in Mississippi[254]

Total Number of Children living in Mississippi	755,180
Percent of children under age 6 with all parents in the labor force	68.8%
Number of children served by Head Start	30,130
Average monthly number of children served by the Child Care Development Fund/CCDBG	33,900
Average annual cost of child care for a four-year-old in a center	$3,911
Percent of 3-year-olds enrolled in state pre-k, Head Start, or special education programs	25.7%
Percent of 4-year-olds enrolled in state pre-k, Head Start, or special education programs	39.8%

Further state-level analyses of the Head Start Enrollment of Children show an increase in the number of children participating in this federal program – increasing five percent in the last 4 years.

Current Status of Early Childhood Development in Rural Areas

Mississippi has been committed to improving the quality of existing early childhood education and care. The state has been actively involved in increasing access for diverse, underserved populations and in expanding access and quality of early childhood education. Specifically, the following federal programs and state initiatives have been part of a comprehensive action plan.

---

[253] Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute (2011), A Monograph, Early Childhood Education in Rural Communities: Access and Quality issues.
[254] Source: Children's Defense Fund. Fact Sheet, March 2013

Holistic Services in the Areas of Education, Early Child Development, Medical, Dental, Mental Health, Nutrition, and Parent Involvement

Mississippi Head Start Association

Head Start programs are designed to build on the strengths of families and communities. It is a national, federal program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to enrolled children and families. Head Start programs provide quality, comprehensive services to low-income children three to five years of age and their families in all 82 Mississippi counties. Early Head Start programs serve children from birth to age three and their families and promote healthy prenatal outcomes, enhance the development of infants and toddlers, and promote healthy family functioning. According to Friends of Children of Mississippi (FCM) statistics, 90 percent of the three- to five-year-old children served by its Head Start program come from low-income families in rural areas throughout Mississippi.

Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative

The Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) is a statewide, nonprofit organization of parents, providers, and community leaders working together to:

- Enhance the quality of child development experiences for all low-income children living in Mississippi.
- Advocate improved child care policies and greater public investment in child care subsidy programs for low-income families.
- Build a strong, grassroots constituency.

The Initiative provides technical assistance, training, and resources to help providers fund low-income child care and enhance its quality so that all our children receive developmentally appropriate care. Workshops are offered throughout the state on child development, child care funding sources, business development, services for low-income families, and how government affects child care. Together with partners and community leaders, MLICCI also advocates for effective reforms and educates the public and policymakers about the need to increase public

investment in child care to expand the supply; removes barriers facing poor working families looking for child care; and improves the quality of early childhood services for all families.

Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) Mississippi

SPARK Mississippi is an early education initiative that brings together parents, schools, early education providers (including child care and Head Start), child advocacy groups, state and local government agencies, and businesses for the purpose of ensuring school readiness and academic success for Mississippi's children ages three to eight. SPARK Mississippi currently serves students residing in the catchment areas of 10 Mississippi school districts - Cleveland, Hollandale, North Bolivar, Pearl, Mound Bayou, West Bolivar, West Tallahatchie, Humphreys County, East Jasper, and Clarksdale. The SPARK Mississippi program provides a variety of supports to participating families:

- Books and other learning materials.
- A learning advocate who makes home visits for the purpose of assisting family members in supporting their children in the transition to school from their early learning program.
- Technical assistance to early care and education programs serving SPARK children, which includes an on-site evaluation of the learning environment based on the results of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale.

Analysis of data collected over a seven year period of SPARK's operation in five rural Mississippi communities revealed that of 610 third grade students in the same public schools who took the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT):

- In the Mathematics section of the MCT, a higher percentage of the SPARK participants (6.9 percent) scored in the Advanced level compared to non-SPARK children (2.3 percent).
- In the Language Arts section of the MCT, a higher percentage of the SPARK cohort (6.9 percent) scored in the Advanced level than the comparison group (6.1 percent).
- Nearly half (48.4 percent) of the SPARK students scored proficient compared to only 24.4 percent of the comparison students in Mathematics.
- In the Language Arts section of the MCT, 39 percent of SPARK children scored proficient compared to only 22.9 percent of the comparison group.

Save the Children Mississippi

Save the Children is a global program providing services to help children birth to five and their families. Save the Children's Early Steps to School Success program assists children with language skills, social, and emotional development, equips parents with the skills and knowledge to successfully support their child's growth, and develops strong home-school connections. The program aims to build a strong foundation for parenting and school readiness and serves as a significant catalyst in helping children achieve a lifetime of learning. It launched in Mississippi during the 2006-2007 school year; the program currently partners with 17 schools and communities in 10 counties, serving 6,700 children and is mostly implemented in rural areas of the state. Save the Children Mississippi program has yielded positive results. 2011 data reveal the following:

- Literacy Results: Children in the program read an average of 52 books during the school year, and more than 59 percent of participants showed significant reading improvement. On average, literacy improvement among program participants was equivalent to an additional 4.1 months of schooling.
- Health Results: Children participated in an average of 31 minutes of physical activity per day and were introduced to nutritious snack options.
- National Early Steps Results: 84 percent of three-year-olds in the Early Steps program scored at or above the normal range for vocabulary acquisition.
- Resilient and Ready Results: 469 Mississippi adults and 5,738 children were trained in disaster preparedness.

Child Care Centers Sector

Mississippi Building Blocks

Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB) is a private-sector-funded pilot program designed to assist existing licensed child care centers in making improvements to their programs by a) improving teaching and learning, b) strengthening parenting skills, and c) improving school readiness among entering kindergarteners.

Technical Assistance and Training

MBB's work supports children's growth, development, and early learning. This is achieved by a) on-site, classroom-based mentors, who provide year-round instructional support to lead and assist teachers (to that end, local school district partnerships enhance professional development activities and bridge the gap between child care centers and the public school curriculum); b) Classroom Materials on literacy and language; c) Parent Education with services to families; d) Business Consulting, where business advisors counsel child care center directors/bookkeepers on financial management and related business practices. The MBB model has shown to produce improved student outcomes in several school readiness indicators, based on the comprehensive approach to support the early learning educator and director, involve the parents, and rely on data for continuous feedback.

MBB started in 2008 as a three-year pilot initiative to improve the quality of early learning experiences for children birth through age four. The program currently serves 42 child care centers in eighteen counties. MBB is implemented in 100 randomly selected classrooms in licensed child care centers throughout Mississippi. MBB provides instructional mentoring, $3,000 per classroom in materials, scholarships for Child Development Associate (CDA)-certified teachers, parent education, and business advice to assist directors in financial and operational management.

Furthermore, researchers at the Center for Family Policy and Research (CFPR), serving as the Independent Evaluator for MBB project and using quantitative and qualitative methods, have evaluated the impact of MBB on child outcomes, classroom quality, and changes in teacher's instructional skills. Findings from year 4 indicate that the MBB program is very well received by EC program directors and teachers. However, upon studying the actual implementation of MBB, researchers noted that some MBB coaches did not fully implement all aspects of MBB's classroom coaching model (e.g., using data from the fidelity tool and instructional checklists to inform the coaching process). Thus, treatment group teacher and child data were analyzed based on this finding (e.g., effective and ineffective coaching). The findings indicated the quality of coaching had a significant impact on teacher fidelity scores (teachers with effective coaching had higher fidelity scores) and some areas of child outcomes (children enrolled in classrooms with effective coaches scored higher on the Definitional Vocabulary subscale of the Test of Preschool Early Literacy). MBB is endeavoring to implement CFPR researchers' findings and

recommendations in order to intervene more consistently across treatment classrooms. This includes using data to inform the coaching process. During year 5, MBB will work with EC programs across the state serving children ages infant to kindergarten entry. [255]

Early Childhood Education Providers Sector - Parents and Educators

Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Center (MSCCR&R)

The MSCCR&R is offered through the Mississippi State University Extension Service. This is a network system that intends to assist early child care and education professionals, parents, children and community members with referrals and information about quality child care. The system's Resource and Referral sites are mostly located on community college campuses and serve all 82 counties in Mississippi.

The MSCCR&R network provides a systematic approach to the training and career building of early care and education providers emphasizing the Three- and Four-year-old Early Learning Guidelines through training workshops. It offers distance-learning technology and observation opportunities for early care and education providers. Each workshop participant continuously receives further information, follow-up training, and on-site, individually designed technical assistance.

The MSCCR&R system serves as an extension hand to providers and local communities in rural or remote areas. Specifically, it is designed to benefit early childhood educators and caretakers, as well as Children with High Needs.

Excel by 5

Excel by 5 is an innovative early childhood community certification process focusing on young children of a community. This program has been funded by a grant of a private corporation (Chevron) and is currently working with 29 communities throughout the state of Mississippi.

Currently, 13 communities have met the challenge and fulfilled the requirements to become certified Excel by 5 "early childhood" communities. In addition, 16 communities are candidates, which means they have accepted the challenge to become certified Excel by 5 "child-friendly"

---

[255] Human Development and Family Studies, College of Human Environmental Sciences, University of Missouri

communities. Complete maps of certified, as well as candidate communities can be found in the Appendix Competitive Priority 3. Excel by 5 brings together a variety of standards that involve parent training, community participation, child care, and health to help communities focus on supporting young children and their families. In the certification process efforts, local communities located in predominantly rural areas (such as the Mississippi Delta region) or in areas with low population concentration engage in improving children's educational well-being.

Early Childhood Associations

The various early childhood associations in Mississippi serve as non-profit, educational organizations that aim to provide resources, information, and alliances about care and education of young children in many local areas. The Mississippi Early Childhood Alliance (MECA™) organization is involved in putting together regional conferences like the Imagine Conference, which offers a variety of educational workshops, sessions, and tracks. The MECA™ organization holds an annual conference and is a product of the partnership between the Child Care Directors Network and the Mississippi Learning Institute Sally McDonnell Barksdale Educational Resource Center at Jackson State University. The goal of the MECA™ Conference is to advance the efforts of Mississippi's early childhood and child care professionals by providing professional development that will help improve school readiness outcomes among children age birth to 5 and promote their long-term success.

Family Child Care Providers Sector

The Nurturing Homes Initiative

The Nurturing Homes Initiative is conducted by Mississippi State University Extension Service and is funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development. This technical assistance program provides rural child care providers with toys, books, and other learning materials. It also offers providers regular coaching on supporting children's language, literacy, and overall development. During 2001, the Mississippi State University Extension Service provided the Nurturing Homes Initiative pilot project in 12 Mississippi counties, with participation by 60 family home-care providers. The data showed statistically significant positive effects in each of the subscales of the Family Day Care Rating Scale (now revised to the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale - see Appendix

Competitive Priority 5). The project is being replicated and expanded throughout the State and continues to be successful.

Child Healthcare and Healthy Lifestyle Sector

Delta Early Learning Project (DELP)

The DELP was designed to promote better health and learning for young children in the Mississippi Delta region. The project had three components:

- The Maternal-Infant Health Outreach Program (MIHOW) provided counseling to pregnant women and mothers of children ages birth to 3 years. Experienced parent educators advised on issues of prenatal health, infant and toddler development, nutrition, and parenting skills.
- The Young Motherhood Sisterhood was a series of classes on personal health, healthy lifestyles, and child health and development. This coursework was addressed to expectant and young mothers who were enrolled in junior or senior high school.
- The Delta Promise School was a summer program designed to help five-year-old children make the transition from Head Start to kindergarten. In the program setting, a combination of nutritious meals and snacks, fun activities, and intensive early literacy experiences were offered to young children.

The Rural Health Scholars Program

The Rural Health Scholars Program is a partnership between the Delta Health Alliance and the University of Mississippi Medical Center, School of Medicine, focused on promoting and encouraging new health care physicians to choose careers in primary care in the rural Mississippi Delta. To date, a total of 53 learners have completed rural rotations in six Mississippi Delta counties. The presence of learners at preceptor sites allowed for more patients to be seen in a shorter period of time.

Children's Oral Health

The Children's Oral Health initiative is a partnership between the Delta Health Alliance and Mississippi Department of Health dedicated to improving the oral health outcomes of young children who attended licensed child care centers in Mississippi Delta counties. During the 2010-2011 cycle, the program targeted Coahoma, Leflore, Holmes, Sunflower, Issaquena, and

Sharkey counties, which was a five county increase from the previous cycle. Below is a partial list of services and major accomplishments that the program delivered during the year 2011.

- Oral Health Services for Young Children - A total of 1,762 children in 79 child care centers were screened for oral health diseases and treated with fluoride varnish to prevent dental cavities.
- Cavity Free Kids Training - The Delta Oral Health Project offered and conducted CFK oral health trainings for parents and child care staff in Coahoma County in year two. All staff and parents of participating child care centers were invited to attend, and trainings were held at individual centers and at common locations in the communities.

Priority 6: Invitational Priority - Encouraging Private-Sector Support

Funding from the private sector for early education in Mississippi is unique when compared nationally to the private sector involvement with early learning at the state level. As described in this section, the private sector support has evolved from traditional support, such as donations and other fiscal supports, to active and partnering support, such as lobbying for early learning legislation changes or providing business and operational advice in a formal partnership capacity for early learning directors.

In the early 1990s, leaders in the business industry from across the state began working with early education advocates to inform others in the business community on the importance of a highly educated workforce and how vital early learning for the state's children is to the future success of Mississippi's various industries. Although these efforts were helpful in establishing the relationship between private sector and the early learning community, both sides did not see the connection point for how the groups with apparently vastly different interests and audiences could align. Despite the initial setback, a handful of business leaders continued their deep interest in early learning efforts. Mississippi business leaders created a partnership with the Public Education Forum of Mississippi, a non-profit, non-partisan educational policy research group committed to being the leading force for public education in the state. The majority of the attending audiences still did not have the leadership within the state to understand how to get

actively involved until the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC) got involved and a plan for progress began to take shape.

The Spark to a Business and Early Learning Partnership

Two key events helped grab the attention of the Mississippi business community in the late 1990s. The Mississippi business community realized the direct relationship between the impact of an educated early learning infrastructure and the state's economic well-being. With almost 70 percent of the state population either staying or returning to Mississippi to work after college, the business community realized that supporting the development at the earliest years was critical and vital to the state population. Also, one of the state's largest philanthropists, Jim Barksdale, became highly active in supporting early childhood learning, beginning with a $100 million investment in literacy and reading programs for children and aspiring teachers in Mississippi. Mr. Barksdale also provided initial seed money for the Mississippi Building Blocks initiative and his construction of the Barksdale Reading Institute began to draw the attention of others in the Mississippi business community, creating a statewide interest in the early education of Mississippi's children.

In 2002, the focus of gaining attention and support for early education by the business community was greatly enhanced when MEC began to champion the cause. MEC understood the economic interest of the state to have a highly educated workforce, but they embraced this issue with fervor, placing early learning as one of its top priorities to address. With a reach of 8,000 members and a direct communication with an additional 7,000 business owners, MEC was able to mobilize the private sector around this importance. During this same time period, then Governor Haley Barbour began an initiative focused on competitive and economic growth through modernizing the job creation effort throughout the State. The goal of the initiative was to grow Mississippi businesses by training and hiring Mississippians to be the bulk of the State's industries workforce. This initiative shared many of the same ideas and goals as the MEC's plan to increase support for early education. In a combined effort to improve Mississippi's economic competitiveness, the MEC, with support from the governor's office, began a two-year study on the State and its issues.

Blueprint Mississippi

In 2004, Blueprint Mississippi was released. The Blueprint was Mississippi's first public-private initiative to help create a long-range plan for the State's economic growth, success, and sustainability. Built initially as a research endeavor to inform the state on where it should focus its attention to reach its economic goals, the findings from the Blueprint centered on both economic and educational recommendations.

In order to aid in implementing the recommendations outlined in the Blueprint, including the early learning priorities, Governor Barbour helped create Momentum Mississippi, the state's plan for modernizing job creation efforts in key high-growth, higher-paying sectors. Led by Anthony Topazi, president of Mississippi Power Company, the Momentum Mississippi Task Force, a group consisting of 123 talented and energetic business, education, and civic leaders from every region of the state, provided advice and analysis on Mississippi's business and economic issues. Under Mr. Topazi's leadership, the Momentum Mississippi Task Force engaged in researching how the state's economic environment can be improved through creating a list of specific recommendations that became the basis of the economic legislative agenda for 2005. To promote educational recommendations, the MEC utilized graduates from the Leadership Mississippi program to organize events as well as branding the educational initiatives of Momentum Mississippi.

In 2004, a number of private agencies from across the State worked together to fund a $1,250,000 research project aimed at objectively reviewing the current economic opportunities across Mississippi and recommending actions for putting Mississippi in the place of greatest opportunity. Two main organizations led the project: the MEC's MB Swayze Foundation provided the structure for overseeing the project and assembling the funding for the research and project efforts, and Momentum Mississippi provided long-range economic development planning resources to the Mississippi Development Authority and the state of Mississippi.

The research itself was led by two distinct groups of researchers, educators, and professionals:
- Mississippi University Research Consortium which is made up of the four major research Universities (Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, University of Mississippi and University of Southern Mississippi)

- Mississippi Leaders, business, and community leaders, who held public meetings to offer input and who served as stakeholders, project, advisory and steering council members from across the state who contributed input to the report.

Through the combined efforts of the MEC and Momentum Mississippi, support for early education began rapidly gaining ground across the State. Business leaders coupled with early educational professionals began traveling around the state to conduct "road shows," educating businesses and communities about the importance of educating Mississippi's children early and the future benefits it would yield at the state and local level. Early learning directors also spoke at many of the private sector meetings and educated the business community on the importance of child and brain development in the early years, showing the disparities of opportunity if Children with High Needs do not have access to high quality care. The hands-on involvement of the business leaders in these early stages caught the attention of many philanthropic organization and individuals throughout the state and encouraged many of them to join the cause. The momentum for early education in Mississippi had shifted from a cause to a top priority among the private sector.

To gain a sense of where improvement efforts needed to be directed, 15 roll-out sessions in 13 communities (Biloxi, Cleveland, Corinth, Gulfport, Hattiesburg, Indianola, Jackson, McComb, Meridian, Oxford, Southaven, Starkville, and Tupelo) were conducted. At each location, there was a review of the goals and recommendations, as well as an opportunity for those in attendance to provide information about the area. Electronic polling was held at each stop, and the audience was asked to rank their top three Blueprint Mississippi 2011 goals in order of priority. Education ranked as the top priority.[256]

With regard to the goal of increase the educational achievement level of Mississippians, recommendations based on findings from the Blueprint included:

- Investing in the future by ensuring that the state's youngest citizens (and future generations) receive the highest quality education from birth onward;

---

[256] http://www.msmec.com/images/blueprint/pdf/BPMS.FINALFORPOSTING.UPDATED.2.1.12.pdf

- Increasing average educational achievement levels through retention and by attracting highly educated newcomers;
- Improving teacher quality;
- Creating a quality early childhood education and development system;
- Transitioning to all-appointed superintendents by 2015;
- Allowing conversion to charter school status of any school that for two or more consecutive years is rated below "successful" under the state's accountability system (the charter should be granted only to entities that have a track record of success in operating charter schools, per determination of the State Board of Education, and all children who live within the school's attendance zone should be eligible to attend the new charter school, which should be subject to the state's accountability standards);
- Supporting the Education Achievement council in its efforts to increase the number of Associate's and Bachelor's degree holders; and
- Developing incentives to attract and retain highly educated citizens.

Results of the Blueprint helped current Governor Phil Bryant set up Mississippi Works[257], an initiative focused on crafting a long-range strategy to expand economic opportunities in Mississippi with a focus on workforce development; helping to bring new investments to all regions of our state while continuing to grow existing businesses and expand them into new markets; and providing a forum for Mississippi Business Leaders to learn about all the great work going on throughout our state, giving them tools they can use in spreading Mississippi's success stories around our nation and world. Through Mississippi Works, the educational goals of Blueprint Mississippi have gained more support through another State organization focused on improving the education of all Mississippians.

The results of Blueprint Mississippi, Mississippi Works and the commitment of thousands of businesses and communities across the State have made possible the zeitgeist of change that has recently been realized across Mississippi and is exemplified by the incipient funding from the State government for early childhood education.

---

[257] http://www.mississippiworks.org/

Leadership Mississippi

Leadership Mississippi is an annual program of the Mississippi Economic Council conducted by the M.B. Swayze Foundation. Participants, selected by a committee of MEC's Leadership Mississippi Alumni, work together in a training program that combines individual study, group sessions, and project experience in using leadership skills. Leadership Mississippi is the second oldest statewide leadership program in the nation. Since its inception in 1974, Leadership Mississippi has graduated more than 1,000 alumni active in Mississippi business and politics. Mississippi's top business executives have participated in Leadership Mississippi as a way to expand their networks. Many elected leaders, including a former governor, are graduates and recognize the value of the Leadership Mississippi experience.

Planting Early Learning Initiatives

Thanks to the donations of resources and time from the business community and donations from multiple philanthropic organizations, Mississippi began aggressively addressing the lack of early education in the State by reinvesting in early learning initiatives already in place throughout the state as well as working with local and state agencies in creating new ones. In 2008, Mississippi business leaders and education advocates announced the launch of Mississippi Building Blocks (MBB), a pilot initiative to improve the quality of early learning experiences for children birth through age 4. The initiative is designed to improve teaching and learning in licensed child care centers, strengthen parenting skills, improve school readiness for children entering kindergarten, and increase the number of centers participating in Mississippi's current TQRIS. A partners of private funders have committed $8 million in funding over the next three years to the state's quality early learning initiatives. The current initiative serves approximately 400 child care centers and reaches hundreds of children every year. MBB provides participating centers with a variety of resources to assist them in meeting program outcomes. Program facilitators helped to recruit centers to participate and provide assistance in accessing trainings and meeting professional development requirements. Participating centers receive classroom materials and resources based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-R (ECERS-R) and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – R (ITERS-R) and assistance from business providers on best practices in financial management. They also have access to a professional development model, which provides scholarships and training in early care and education and enables teachers to obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) degree, as well as on-site teacher mentors to

help them implement new quality strategies learned through their training. Participating families work with a parent advocate, through home visits and in the child care center, to learn more about child development and parenting. The initiative also has a program evaluation component to examine the program's outcomes. Participating children are tracked individually across multiple years, and program quality is monitored through an independent audit of each program element.

In that same year, Department of Human Services helped implement Mississippi's current TQRIS, the first state initiative oriented toward ensuring that early learning is of the highest quality. The TQRIS was designed to provide incentives to improve the quality of existing early childhood education and afterschool programs and provide Mississippi children the skills necessary for success in school. This system allows licensed programs that choose to participate to receive monetary rewards (quality bonuses over and above the current Child Care Development Fund voucher reimbursement level) for meeting certain criteria.

Growing Early Learning Initiatives

With the roots of early childhood learning planted, the business community increased their involvement in early learning advocacy to ensure that it continued to grow and bear fruit. The MEC returned to the grass roots approach to educating other business and community leaders through an updated version of the "road shows" that had proven to be successful in the past. The more contemporary "road shows" included more involvement from the government sector. Local and state government officials would get involved to show their support of early education. Mission Readiness, a nonpartisan national security organization of senior retired military leaders calling for smart investments in America's children, would attend the shows to help educate local businesses and communities on the importance of expanding high-quality early childhood programs and how it relates to military jobs. The Leadership Mississippi graduates, armed with research and findings from the initial early childhood efforts, gave improved presentations and slideshows on the science and statistics behind the importance of early learning and empirical evidence of how beneficial it is to children as well as presenting the results of the business led MBB program. But efforts did not stop there. Business leaders, educators, and philanthropists all joined together to lobby state legislators to get involved and support the early learning of Mississippi's children. On April 18, 2013, under the leadership of Governor Phil Bryant, Senate

Bill 2395, affectionately known as the Mississippi Early Learning Collaborative Act, was signed into law. The Legislature funded $6 million for the bill and the expansion of the business led MBB Model. This piece of legislation marked the first time in Mississippi's history that the state government has given any funding to early childhood education.

Sustaining Private Sector Support for Early Learning Reform in Mississippi

The passing of the Mississippi Early Learning Collaborative Act and funding for MBB represented a major victory in the fight for educating Mississippi's children as well as for the businesses, industries, and communities across the state. However, Mississippi is a persistent and hardworking state, always looking to the future and ways to improve. Obtaining funding from the state government was a good beginning and set the benchmark for future endeavors. To truly be successful, the state must continually improve and change. Blueprint Mississippi was designed to be an ongoing research project aimed at comparing Mississippi to other states and recommending changes to meet the demands of an ever changing global economy. Each year findings from the Blueprint are reviewed and the recommendations are updated, and each year early learning is at the top of the list of priorities.

Over the last 15 years, the private sector has championed early learning in Mississippi, and there are no signs that their efforts are slowing down. The business community continues to support many early learning initiatives (e.g., MBB, Excel by 5, and SPARK), and philanthropic organizations like the Barksdale Foundation have pledged their support for early learning well into the future. Based on the evolving plans and goals to orient the state in a direction that promotes success (i.e., Blueprint Mississippi) and support from the private sector, it is evident that Mississippi has embraced early learning as a long-term goal and not a short-term effort.

Table 6. High Quality Plan for Meeting Competitive and Invitational Priorities

Competitive and Invitational Priorities

Aligned with "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform:

- Goal 1: Support Statewide Implementation of Early Learning standards that are aligned with K -3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi
- Goal 2: Expand state's Revised TQRIS system at scale to promotes quality improvements statewide and improve access to quality for high-needs children.
- Goal 3: Promote consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities for all Mississippi early educators to improve instruction for early learning programs
- Goal 4: Improve professional knowledge on the implications for child outcomes early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers on the statewide kindergarten entry assessment
- Goal 5: Integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system

	Lead Agency	Alignment with Priorities				
		Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6
Project #1: RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	SECAC	x	x	x	x	x
Project #2: Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	MDE	x		x	x	
Project #3: Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	MDE	x		x	x	
Project #4: Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	MDE	x	x	x	x	x
Project #5: Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	MDE	x	x	x	x	
Project #6: Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	MDE	x	x	x	x	x
Project #7: Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	SECAC	x	x	x	x	x
Project #8: Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	MDE	x		x	x	
Project #9: Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	SECAC	x		x	x	x
Project #10: Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	MDE	x		x	x	x
Project #11: Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	MDE	x			x	

Project #12: Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	MDE	x	x		x	
Project #13: Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	nSPARC	x	x	x	x	
Project #14: Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	SECAC/D HS	x	x	x	x	x

Budget

Budget Part I -Narrative

Describe, in the text box below, the overall structure of the State's budget for implementing the State Plan, including
- *A list of each Participating State Agency, together with a description of its budgetary and project responsibilities;*
- *A list of projects and a description of how these projects taken together will result in full implementation of the State Plan;*
- *For each project:*
    - *The designation of the selection criterion or competitive preference priority the project addresses;*
    - *An explanation of how the project will be organized and managed in order to ensure the implementation of the High-Quality Plans described in the selection criteria or competitive preference priorities; and*
- *Any information pertinent to understanding the proposed budget for each project.*

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET				
Budget Table I-1: Budget Summary by Budget Category				
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))				
Budget Categories	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grant Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
1. Personnel	604,406	610,669	610,669	610,669	**2,436,412**
2. Fringe Benefits	196,882	199,162	199,162	199,162	**794,370**
3. Travel	38,182	38,182	38,182	38,182	**152,726**
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	**0**
5. Supplies	29,091	29,091	29,091	29,091	**116,364**
6. Contractual	2,084,144	1,549,685	1,549,685	1,549,686	**6,733,200**
7. Training Stipends	584,266	584,266	584,266	584,266	**2,337,063**
8. Other	468,478	468,478	468,478	468,478	**1,873,912**
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	**4,005,449**	**3,479,533**	**3,479,533**	**3,479,533**	**14,444,047**
10. Indirect Costs*	664,550	570,467	570,467	570,467	**2,375,952**
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	5,020,000	5,020,000	5,020,000	5,020,000	**20,080,000**

12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	**9,789,999**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**37,299,999**
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	**0**
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**9,789,999**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**37,299,999**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6.

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET				
Budget Table I-2: Budget Summary by Participating State Agency				
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))				
Agency Name	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grant Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
Office of the Governor/SECAC	630,000	410,000	410,000	410,000	**1,860,000**
MS Dept of Education	5,780,000	5,780,000	5,780,000	5,780,000	**23,120,000**
MS Dept of Human Services	285,000	245,000	245,000	245,000	**1,020,000**
MS Dept of Health	1,410,000	1,350,000	1,350,000	1,350,000	**5,460,000**
MS Institutions of Higher Learning	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	**200,000**
MS Board for Community Colleges	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	**1,000,000**
nSPARC	1,385,000	1,085,000	1,085,000	1,085,000	**4,640,000**
Total Statewide Budget	**9,790,000**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**37,300,000**

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET				
Budget Table I-3: Budget Summary by Project				
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))				
Project	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grant Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	380,000	160,000	160,000	160,000	**860,000**
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	**500,000**
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	550,000	550,000	550,000	550,000	**2,200,000**
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	**800,000**
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	410,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	**1,460,000**
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	1,020,000	980,000	980,000	980,000	**3,960,000**
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	1,950,000	1,950,000	1,950,000	1,950,000	**7,800,000**
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000	**640,000**
Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	**3,800,000**

Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	460,000	460,000	460,000	460,000	**1,840,000**
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	**800,000**
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	**2,600,000**
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	1,185,000	885,000	885,000	885,000	**3,840,000**
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	1,450,000	1,450,000	1,450,000	1,450,000	**5,800,000**
0	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**
Total Statewide Budget	**9,790,000**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**9,170,000**	**37,300,000**

Lead Agency and Oversight Protocols

The state of Mississippi is requesting $37,500,000 from the Race to the Top Early Challenge fund. In the following sections, we will discuss Mississippi's commitment to providing appropriate and thorough oversight over the grant implementation activities, both from a fiscal perspective as well as a high-quality programmatic implementation perspective.

Because our approach includes multiple state agencies, stakeholders, public and private partners, we will also describe the governance plan with respect to the individual projects that we proposed. This governance plan is comprehensive and has been used for other similar projects.

The State Early Childhood Advisory Council of Mississippi (SECAC) will be responsible for overseeing all project implementation from the Participating State Agencies. SECAC has the leadership and experience to provide the appropriate oversight for the project. SECAC is located within the Governor's Office and has a statewide focus. It was established in 2008 and it is led by Dr. Laurie Smith, the Governor's senior education advisor. We are privileged and excited to have Dr. Smith as our proposed project director for this opportunity based on her extensive leadership experience at the classroom, policy, center, and state level:

- Former executive director for of the nationally recognized Mississippi Buildings Blocks program for four years
- Director of early learning state initiatives at Mississippi State University for eight years
- Director of Partners for Quality Childcare for two years
- Launched the Emerson Family School in Starkville Mississippi, the first pre-K program for the Starkville School District that now serves over 300 children
- Taught pre-K through 5th grade in multiple districts in Arizona and New Mexico

Dr. Smith will be supported by a deputy project director as well as multiple project managers (see below for more details). As discussed in Section A, SECAC will provide appropriate dispute resolution as needed, among the participating state agencies. Because SECAC consists of representatives from all participating state agencies responsible for children's education and care, educational professionals, policymakers, and other important stakeholders in the state, this Council is best poised to provide the leadership necessary for a comprehensive state system or form for early child care.

State Leadership
Early Learning &
Development (ELD)

Key Strategies
RTT-ELC & ELD

Strategic Products
& Recipients of
ELD Providers

LEAD AGENCY

State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) (Office of the Governor)

"One Mississippi" Mississippi's Statewide Plan for Reforming the Early Learning System

National Strategic Planning and Analysis Center (nSPARC)

Mississippi Department of Human Services

Mississippi Community Colleges

Mississippi State Department of Health

Mississippi Department of Education

Institutes of Higher Learning

Head Start Centers & Licensed Childcare Centers

Mississippi Children Ages 0 - 5

As presented in the organizational chart above, the Office of the Governor will provide all project oversight through Dr. Laurie Smith, the governor's senior education advisor, Executive Director of SECAC, and the Project Director for this grant. The Early Childhood Institute (ECI) at Mississippi State University will receive a contract to provide overall grant project management to support Dr. Smith as well as a Deputy Project Manager. This contract will be in place for all four years and will allow proper day-to-day project management and communications with all participating state agencies and their respective project managers. ECI's long history in the state, as well as its deep relationships with all participating state agencies will enhance not only the project management but also the communication and coordination for many of the projects proposed.

The Office of the Governor will act as the fiscal agent for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. As a state agency, the Office of the Governor currently manages almost $100 million of federal grants, and has ample staff, policies, and procedures to handle the state agency responsibility for effectively overseeing this grant. We are confident that the Office of the Governor, the fiscal agent and overseer of all project implementation, is the best agency for directly overseeing and controlling all core aspects of implementing our ambitious plan. Since SECAC is under the Office of Governor, SECAC will utilize the same policies and safeguard procedures this state agency has used to monitor other federal grants and have received stellar performance reviews from their annual audits. Proper fiscal management of all funds, federal or state, has been a priority for Governor Phil Bryant, who was the state's auditor for over ten years.

"A lot of leaders talk about adapting a private sector business model within government, but in the application of more than 4.6 billion in federal recovery funds, Mississippi can take pride in the fact that a private sector model was not only contemplated, but implemented successfully.

The numbers testify to the states nimble, well-oiled recovery apparatus. More than 40,000 homes constructed, rehabilitated or financed. More than 200 brick and mortar infrastructure projects completed. All of this with less than ONE TENTH of ONE percent in confirmed fraud, with nearly half of this recovered through restitution. The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners 2012 Report to the Nation points out that companies lose anywhere from 5 to 7 percent of top line revenue annually due to fraud. In Mississippi, this was .005 percent.

The record has made Mississippi a national leader and often consulted state in the years since a Hurricane Katrina. Subsequent disasters like Hurricane Sandy last year along the Atlantic coast as well as flooding and other storms have compelled other states to model their own recovery programs after those successfully formulated and managed in Mississippi.

Specifically Mississippi's design of preventive and detective internal controls within processes and systems, along with end-to-end accountability systems, have been the key to Mississippi's low fraud rate and timely disbursals. The state made a point of having financial professionals from the private sector design implementable and enforceable controls, which track and measure production simultaneously with product delivery.

Participating State Agencies

Six state agencies will be involved in the implementation of the State plan. These agencies consistently work together on the current early learning state system, and all have a representation on SECAC.

Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)

The MDE will be responsible for all management of the professional development projects for QRS as well as the early learning standards. The Office of Early Learning at MDE will develop a centralized model for coordinating professional development opportunities under this grant. MDE will also be the fiscal agent for scaling up many of the successful programs currently in existence, such as Mississippi Building Blocks and Excel by Five. MDE will also be responsible for the administration and evaluation of the statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Due to the additional programming and fiscal oversight required of the Mississippi Department of Education through this grant, and additional five FTE will be added (see Budget Part II for more information).

Mississippi Department of Health (MSDH)

MSDH will be responsible for all projects related to licensing of child care centers as well as provide lead management over projects relating to the evaluation of and support of the revisions to the state TQRIS. This will provide a multi-agency approach for separating the state agency involved with administering the TQRIS and the evaluating agency.

Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)

MDHS will provide project management over all activities focusing on infant and toddler quality improvement. MDHS will also provide services such as an evaluation and assistance as well as aligning current standards. MDHS will leverage its 50 year partnership the state's Head Start program to also focus on family engagement and home visiting programs as well as a projects related to the Head Start collaborative. MDHS will also focus on projects relating to improving nutrition and health and many of the workforce incentive programs that are proposed in this application.

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) and Mississippi Board for Community Colleges (MCCB)

These institutions of higher learning will provide project management over professional development certification projects under these grant activities. They will also be responsible for incentives or scholarship programs for their respective programs, as well as promotion of accreditation for their respective institutions. They will also provide leadership to align the state's various early learning educator credential programs with a unified state career lattice, assist with research-based activities such as evaluations of programs, and support the alignment of early learning standards providing research-based direction and high quality.

National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC)

nSPARC, a research center at Mississippi State University, will be responsible for all activities related to the state's early learning longitudinal data. nSPARC will also be responsible for the reporting and policy development for any projects proposed in this application.

Alignment of Mississippi's Proposed Projects with States Goals and RTT-ELC Selection Criteria

In order to achieve our high-quality plan for reforming the state early learning system, we have proposed a set of ambitious yet achievable projects that align with our state early learning goals as well as the RTT-ELC selection criteria. Our 5 Goals that encompass the "One Mississippi" State Plan for Early Learning Reform:

1. Expand use of consistent Early learning standards that are aligned with K-3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi
2. Expand the state's current TQRIS system at scale that promotes quality improvements and improves access to quality for high-needs children.
3. Promote consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities to improve instruction in early learning programs
4. Scale a high-quality Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy-makers
5. Integrate family and community engagement, and parenting support throughout the early learning system

Mississippi's Approach to Project Planning

The five proposed goals will be achieved with the implementation of 14 projects aimed at addressing the state's TQRIS system, Early Learning standards, professional development, and family and community engagement. Our application proposes activities that will lead to comprehensive state reform. Therefore, we fully understand that the 14 projects must be executed in a coordinated fashion rather than single, independent projects. To this end, we will develop a workplan to clearly outline how activities in one project relate to the success and accomplishment of those in another project. Each entity engaged in achieving the proposed five goals will be fully informed about the importance of working together and how important it is to achieving the overall goals of the project rather than the parts independently. Within the aggressive timeline of the grant, we have proposed a continuous improvement approach for accomplishing our state goals. We will set milestones and evaluate how the "Missisisppi team" together is contributing to the accomplishment of specific milestones. In our implementation of

the project, we will also create a communication plan to inform duties and responsibilities, and at the same time inform areas of improvement when it is needed. This continuous improvement approach will also ensure the state's sustainability for these efforts beyond the grant period. Following lessons learned from other states, as well as Mississippi's experience with implementing of USDOE competitive grants (SLDS Grant 2009, SLDS ARRA Grant 2013), we have designed an approach with the following in mind:

1. Mississippi is thoroughly committed to reforming it early learning system beyond the four years of this grant. To this end, we will design and develop a sustainability plan that will leverage and change and reform brought about by activities under this grant.

2. We will also require all projects to implement a continuous feedback activity such that projects will not be narrowly focused on implementation, and balanced such that the project managers and implementers will need to continually analyze how the implementation can be improved, how it is being implemented, and what changes need to be made to guarantee success.

3. No plan can have long-term success without appropriate buy-in. Buy-in is important for sustainability of these efforts and for maintaining the collaborative nature of our early learning system. Therefore, we have balanced our projects to align with both promotion and mandating, balancing the sensitivities of engagement. We realize that some of the projects below are required in some states, whereas our approach will be to heavily promote and incentivize. The choice is between incentivizing and requiring were thoughtful based on our state discussions when approaching and proposing these goals.

Alignment of Projects and approach to Goals and Criteria

The following chart provides an overview of the "One Mississippi" State Goals for Early Learning Reform, 14 projects, and their alignment with the RTT-ELC selection criteria. Within each description of the project, we will also list the subprojects that provide more specificity as

well as responsibility for the participating state agencies. Refer to the end of each Selection Criteria section for a detailed table of the alignment of the projects to the selection criteria, as well as expected funding breakdown between the RTT-ELC grant and the state supported funding.

Detailed Project Descriptions and Supporting Activities

The 14 projects proposed above all require a combination of state and private funding as well as RTT-ELC grant funding. In the following sections, we have provided a detailed overview of each of the 14 projects, as well as the subprojects to provide a detailed overview of the activities we propose. In some cases, the sun activities under the 14 projects do not require RTT-ELC grant funding, however we included these sub activities because these are important for meeting the overall project which is important for meeting the overall goal. In these cases, these sub-activities are funded by current state efforts through a variety of sources, and will be described below.

Project 1: ELC Management and Transformation Support (Selection criteria A1, B5, invitational priorities 6, C3)

Project 1 includes 5 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 5 subprojects.

Subproject 1a: Project management, travel for outreach to communities

Under this project, SECAC will have the responsibility to manage all activities pertinent to the completion of the grant. During the 4 year project, three individuals will be responsible for travelling and community outreach. This will require individuals to travel on a monthly basis, and engage multiple community stakeholders. One member will oversee the other two, who will travel to outreach to communities in Mississippi. The overseer will conduct weekly meetings, ensure that the two staff travel one week each month, and make a point to visit a community within each county of the state for the purposes of the grant.

Subproject 1b: Performance management and change management assessment

Under this activity, the state will contract with a reputable external firm to provide performance management principles for the state of Mississippi. To assist with establishing the performance

management behaviors, we will front load this piece by 75% in year one, using $75,000 of the $100,000 requested. The remaining funds would allow ongoing and continuous support for the state. We will also have second external contract with a research firm to provide a needs assessment for change management principles who will provide a needs assessment for change management principles. By using these 2 external firms, we will educate the state agencies and partners on how to implement an aggressive strategy for implementation.

Subproject 1c: Implement training for all standards through expansion of MBB model to child care centers.

This activity is central to our sustainability plan, which will be updated on a yearly basis. This activity will accomplished by contracting with an outside vendor or with an appropriate state agency that has the capacity to conduct training activities. This will be a onetime cost of $20,000 that will be completed by the end of year one.

Subproject 1d: Develop an Early Learning office at MDE for Year 4

This state-funded effort will be very important for the State of Mississippi to invest our tax dollars in, for a smooth and effective transition at the end of the four year period. SECAC will provide the leadership and guidance. No grant funds are requested for this activity, and the office will be in place and fully operational by the end of the fourth year. It will also create two new jobs within the state that will oversee the Race to the Top long time investment after the grant is completed.

Subproject 1e: Develop a peer network of states for assisting Mississippi with implementing the state's aggressive early learning reform goals as well as providing assistance after the grant:

Travel will be required to accomplish this activitiy. Specifically, one SECAC employee will travel to peer states as well as use the funds to bring in visiting staff from the peer states to come to Mississippi. Funds may also be used to provide 'state scans' which are mainly briefs of small research studies.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #1: RTTELC Management and Transformation Support																
Subproject 1a: Overall RTT-ELC project management, travel for outreach to communities and organizations, travel for parental participation on SECAC meetings and events.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Outreach to communities for listening sessions with parents	X		x		x		x		x		x		x		x	
SECAC Governance meetings on grant implementation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 1b: Issue two contracts to support Mississippi with Performance Management of the RTT-ELC grant as well as understanding Change Management for ensuring successful culture change to support the reform efforts.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop RFP for Performance Management contract and issue award	x	x														
Begin implantation of Performance Management processes			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Issue RFP for sustainability contract	x	x														
Conduct scan for change management approach			x	x												
Report received by SECAC for recommendations for change management for Early Learning reforms					x											
Change management assessment is provided to SECAC and the Participating state agencies						x				x				x		
Subproject 1c: Sustainability plan for the state of Mississippi in Year 1 to begin planning for transitions of end of grant activities in Year 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meet with the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC) to discuss potential State Agencies with the capability and resources to implement the transition plan.	X															
Identify and enter into contract with State Agency selected to create the transition plan.		X	X	X												
Begin phasing-in transition plan to maintain sustainability					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 1d: Develop a fully functioning Early Learning office at MDE to	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
coordinate the alignment and programs offered for early learning and transitions to elementary.																
Create recruitment letter for the three Early Learning Coordination and Alignment Specialists	X															
Submit recruitment to professional journals, internet job-boards, and newspapers.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Evaluate applicant credentials and begin initial round of interviews			X	X												
Begin second round of interviews				X	X											
Begin Final Interview Process						X										
Make Job Offers							X									
Hire three Early Learning Coordination and Alignment Specialists								X								
Subproject 1e: Develop a peer network of states for assisting Mississippi with implementing the state's aggressive early learning reform goals as well as providing assistance after the grant.	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X		X	
Contact States with similar demographic and geographic backgrounds as Mississippi to discuss overcoming barriers to plan implementation	X	X	X													
Visit the peer states to discuss current progress and setbacks					X				X				X			
Host peer states to discuss current progress and setbacks							X				X				X	

Project 2: Improve alignment, quality, and understanding of EL Standards

Project 2 includes 2 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 2 subprojects.

Subproject 2a: Adopt, align, and test fidelity of early learning standards for infants and toddlers

MDE will oversee this part of the project, and MDHS will be the project lead. The state will pay for the adoption and alignment of the infant and toddler standards to the early learning standards. The additional funds will be allocated to an internal organization in the state of Mississippi that has evaluation capacity.

Subproject 2b: Test fidelity of use of standards of three-year-old and four-year-old children in the classrooms:

Under this activity funds will be used to provide for an annual assessment using an external contractor to test the fidelity within classrooms. This outside contractor will provide an annual evaluation as well as a summary report on recommendations and suggestions for improving the professional development and other activities that can be used to improve the connection of standards and their implementation.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #2: Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards																
Subproject 2a: Adopt, align and test fidelity (annually) of Early Learning standards for Three-year-old and Four-year-old children with the Infants and Toddlers standards	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adoption, Alignment, and Implementation of Early Learning standards for Infants and Toddlers to all state funded centers with the capabilities to care for infants and toddlers.					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify Agencies with the capabilities and resources to assess Infants and Toddlers			X	X												
Begin annual assessments of Infants and Toddlers						X				X				X		
Report assessment results to Lifetracks							X				X				X	
Dissemination of assessment results into an executive report to monitor progress and guide changes in instruction or curriculum (if necessary)								X				X				X
Subproject 2b: Test fidelity of use of Early Learning Standards for Three-year-old and Four-year-old children in classrooms	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X		
Create and distribute RFP for external evaluators regarding the fidelity testing of the Learning Standards.	X	X														
Evaluation of proposals from external evaluators			X													
Enter into contract wit external evaluator				X												
Begin conducting annual evaluations					X				X				X			
Submit report of testing results						X				X				X		

Project 3: Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to support professional development of EL Standards

Project 3 includes 3 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 3 subprojects.

Subproject 3a: Implement training through expansion of the Mississippi Building Blocks-like Model to Child Care Centers

Support for this activity will be used to help increase the availability of training for early learning centers as well as provide more opportunity for professional development. This is a four year project the immediate goal to have all centers using the K-3 standards by the end of year one.

Subproject 3b: Expand the Petal Parenting Center Model and Implement parents as Teachers Models

The funds for this project will help develop resources that tailor toward implementing the parenting center model. The Parent Center Model will help educate families on different guidelines to further educate their children. The funds will help with childcare assistance, transportation assistance, and any other services that will enable parents to attend and support the expansion for Parenting Center Models throughout the state.

Subproject 3c: Expand Children's Museum Outreach for technical assistance in Early Learning Standards for families

Funds for this activity will be used for expansion of regional off-site workshops, enlarging the capacity for the current online educator and parent portal. The funds will also help aid with any other services that contributes to expanding the Children's Museum Outreach such as equipment, supplies, as well as a part-time staff member that will help support the early learning standards.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #3: Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards																
Subproject 3a: Implement training for all standards through expansion of the Mississippi Building Blocks model to child care centers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Initial training of center faculty and staff on all standards	X	X														
Follow up training of center faculty and staff on all standards			X	X												
Continuing Professional Development Programs					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 3b: Expand the Petal Parenting Center model and implement Parents as Teachers model to educate families on the guidelines and systems	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Initial parent outreach and involvement	X	X														
parental Involvement Sessions			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transportation to and from Sessions			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Childcare during Sessions			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 3c: Expand Children's Museum Outreach for technical assistance in Early Learning standards for families	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Expansion of the number of regional offsite workshops			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Expansion of the number of regional family events		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Upgrade and expand the current online educator and parent portal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hire additional staff (part-time) to accommodate increased participation and monitor safety.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Increase the number of resources and supplies to facilitate an increase in child participation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Project 4: Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards:

Project 4 includes 1 subproject designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline this subproject.

Subproject 4a: Expand Excel by 5 Outreach in 'transformational communities' to include early learning standards awareness and education:

Resources for this activity will be allocated to expand the 'transformational communities' for the Excel by 5 Outreach currently in place to include early learning standards. This will serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi. MDE will have a team of two people who will travel, promote, create curriculum, and encourage the said 'transformational communities'. These people will spend 50% of their year, working strictly on this subproject. this activity will require travel and the creation and dissemination of curriculum and advertising, to encourage adoption of these learning materials.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #4: Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards																
Subproject 4a: Expand Excel by 5 Outreach in "transformational communities" to include early learning standards awareness and education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify Regions and Communities of greatest need	X	X			X	X			X	X			X	X		
Create Excel by 5 locations in 10% of these communities			X	X												
Increase the number of Excel by 5 locations by 10%							X	X			X	X			X	X
Evaluate impact via adoptions of early learning standards and early learning standard scores					X				X				X			

Project 5: Improve the administration quality of the state's TQRIS

Project 5 includes 4 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 4 subprojects.

Subproject 5a: Base Administration Funds for Managing the state's TQRIS

Funds will be used to support the management of the state's TQRIS over a four year term. Each year, the state will provide the appropriate amount of funds to be distributed toward programs and resources that enhances data sharing. These resources will provide guidelines and assistance with the data sharing process and provide support to centers with their data collections. The main portal for data sharing will be provided through a system known as LifeTracks (See Section E(2) for more details). This system tracks the educational progress of children as early as Kindergarten and implement ways to improve the educational system.

Subproject 5b: Revise the current TQRIS to align with national best practices; incorporate health promotion practices

This activity is a state funded effort and requires no grant funds. Therefore, funds are not needed to carry forward with this project. The strategy is to revise the current TQRIS with the best known national practices as well as incorporate health practices.

Subproject 5c: Support alignment efforts related to the state's Licensing Standards for early learning centers and the state's TQRIS

Funds will be used for a one-time assessment contract budgeted to establish the necessary licensing standards tailored to the needs of various state agencies as well as families. Activities will be conducted to help agencies understand the importance of the use of data and how data can be transferred and made available under the state early learning data system. As part of this activity a licensing TQRIS portal will be created at DHS for parents and families. Activities under this task will also be geared toward performing various assessments on other states in order to obtain valuable information and practices for our standard licensing with TQRIS.

Subproject 5d: Process for continuous quality improvement and evaluation in TQRIS through annual evaluation and annual reports

Resources for this activity will be allocated for creating reports that highlight lessons learned from different learning tactics. As specific focus will be on identifying best practices that lead to effective and positive outcomes in a child's learning environment.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #5: Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS																
Subproject 5a: Base administration funds for managing the state's TQRIS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Employing a FTE manager devoted to the MS2S	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development of technical assistance resources, guides, and how-to manuals for entering programs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sharing data with LifeTracks (data leering, data cleaning, and data transmission)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Data support for centers (entering data, assistance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
with problems, data entry workshops)																
Assistance administering parent reports	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assistance managing the evaluation efforts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 5b: Revise the current TQRIS to align with national best practices; incorporate Health promotion practices																
Component is a state-funded																
Subproject 5c: Support alignment efforts related to the state's Licensing Standards for early learning centers and the state's TQRIS, expand transparency of shared data to parents and families	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Create RFP for external evaluation of a one-time assessment of alignment of the MS2S and the licensing standards	X															
Evaluate proposals with regard to best practices, plan of integrating data into LifeTracks		X														
Enter into contract with selected external agency			X													
Evaluate alignment				X												
Create a parent portal at MDHS that has all licensing and MS2S information	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Integrate health and Safety information for parents on the MSDH website	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 5d: Process for continuous quality improvement and evaluation in TQRIS through annual evaluation and annual reports	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enter into contract with Early Learning Centers to establish a quality evaluation	X	X														
Quality Evaluation and Feedback		X				X				X				X		
Follow up Site visit				X				X				X				X
center quality information entered into Lifetracks					X				X				X			
State Early Learning Center Quality Report Written and Sent to MDE						X				X				X		

Project 6: Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS

Project 6 includes 5 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 5 subprojects.

Subproject 6a: Expand Parents as Teachers model to educate families/communities on the guidelines and systems; creation of parent reports

Because everything starts in the home, under this task the main activity will be to educate Mississippi Parents to have a successful home learning environment. We estimate in the beginning we will have team working together on the creation of the parent reports. We will have three people working on the creation of the parent reports that will have an aggressive turnaround time of 6 months. Some of the funds will be used for initial setup during year one, with one full time person to head up this activity in years two, three and four. Funds for this activity will also include travel to reach out to families, as well as to support advertising, curriculum and supplies to improve a parents and community the ability to teach from home.

Subproject 6b: Explore and provide data to support an increase in reimbursement rates and launch a tiered reimbursement policy that allows for high-quality programs to access up to 100% of market rate for purchase of care children

Funds for this activity will be specifically geared towards the continuing collection of data to support an increase in reimbursement rates and launch a tiered reimbursement policy that allows for high-quality programs to access up to 100% of market rate for purchase of care children. Data collected under this activity will be critical promoting quality improvements and improve the access to quality high-needs children.

Subproject 6c: Increase participation in the TQRIS for exempt programs and support 1 and 2-star programs to attain a 3-star or higher rating through Mississippi Building Block model and incentive model for centers

Using an incentive award program, modeled after another state, this activity will help increase participation in the TQRIS for exempt programs and support 1 and 2-star programs to strive to attain a 3-star or higher rating. This activity will organized around the Mississippi Building Block model and incentive model for centers.

Subproject 6d: Using the Excel by 5 model to identify and recruit clergy leaders of religiously affiliated programs to participate

Resources for this activity will be used for annual travel expenses, event expenses, and webinars, or in person meetings to help promote the TQRIS.

Subproject 6e: Encourage center participation through coordination of technical assistance and monitoring visits by licensing staff

Resources for this activity will be used to train 6-10 additional licensing and technical assistance monitors to encourage center participation through coordination of technical assistance and monitoring visits by licensing staff.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #6: Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS																
Subproject 6a: Expand Parents as Teachers model to educate families/communities on the guidelines and systems; creation of parent reports	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Initial outreach to engage parents to enroll in program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instructional trading for parents electing to become a teacher model	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instruction on the completion and submission of parent reports.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Technical Assistance for parents (questions hotline, how-to guides, faqs page)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continuing enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 6b: Explore and provide data to support an Increase in reimbursement rates and launch a tiered reimbursement policy that allows for high-quality programs to access up to 100% of market rate for purchase of care children	X	X	X	X												
Current Financial Needs Assessment and Forecasting	X	X														
Disseminate Results			X													
Communicate Results to State agencies and stakeholders.			X	X												
Subproject 6c: Increase participation in the TQRIS for exempt programs and support 1 and 2-star programs to attain a 3-star or higher rating through Mississippi Building Block model and incentive model for centers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Outreach fairs teaching the importance and benefits of the MS2S	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X	X
Analysis of current 1 and 2 Star centers actively seeking to increase their star rating, to evaluate needed resources to	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Activity																
increase center ratings (material costs, teacher credentials, health and safety needs)																
Coordinate training efforts to increase center staff credentials			X		X		X		X		X		X		X	
Technical Assistance for Center Staff (Business Management, Health and Safety, Nutrition)		X		X		X		X		X		X		X	X	
Subproject 6d: Using the Excel by 5 model to identify and recruit clergy leaders of religiously affiliated programs to participate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reach out to different religious affiliations offering child care services throughout the state.	X	X														
Webinars, meetings, and events discussing the Excel by 5 model and how it has benefitted children across the state.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enrollment and Training of centers and staff			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Collect and report data to LifeTracks				X				X				X				X
Analysis and summation of results reported to religious organizations, state agencies, and stakeholders					X				X				X			
Subproject 6e: Encourage center participation through coordination of technical assistance and monitoring visits by Licensing staff	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Recruitment of center staff for the TA and monitoring program	X	X														
Train recruited center staff members on TA issues and resolutions			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Train recruited center staff members on licensing regulations and how to monitor progress and compliance.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support and Assistance of TA and Licensing monitors via helpful inset guides, computer tutorials, and a phone number to call for assistance			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Project 7: Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS

Project 7 includes 7 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 7 subprojects.

Subproject 7a: Process for continuous quality improvement and evaluation in TQRIS through annual evaluation and reports

Resources for this activity will be used to incorporate the values of Mississippi Building Block model to better support and tailor to schools and classrooms of high need children. This activity is critical to promote continuous improvement of TQRIS. If TQRIS continuous to improve, everyone such as teachers, parents, as well as the children will benefit. With the expansion of Mississippi Building Blocks and the improvement within the TQRIS, this project will have the ability to provide an additional 100 classrooms of high need children with the supplies and learning tools they need to excel and succeed.

Subproject 7b: Implement training for centers and their directors through Mississippi Building Blocks Model to support director's understanding on improving steps on the TQRIS

Resources for this activity will be used to provide support for an additional 100 classrooms mentioned in the prior project, additional staff, resources, and training centers will be needed in order to ensure the implementation is a success. Resources will also be allocated to ensure that directors and staff are fully trained with the proper material in order to deliver effectively to the classroom.

Subproject 7c: Expand Excel by 5 to Communities most in need providing immediate assistance to areas serving higher numbers of high needs students

Resources for this activity will be used to provide support community involvement using the Excel by 5 framework. Excel by 5 provides various activities for both child and parents where they can interact together on different learning subjects. This program is a great way to get early childhood children involved and prepared for Kindergarten. They participate in nursery rhymes, mathematical skills, and as well as art skills. Not only are the children excited and involved, but the community and parents are actively involved also. Excel by 5 helps make a difference in a child's life.

Subproject 7d: Fund 4-6 exemplary centers to act as a model center and use these centers to train other centers on best practices for licensing, TQRIS, etc.

Resources for this activity will be used to identify and support four to six exemplary centers that exhibit effective and efficient practices within licensing and TQRIS. These six centers will act as a model center and train other centers on how to exhibit these practices. The funds will help cover cost of supportive materials, guides, and travel for those lead centers provide training to other various centers. The goal here is to ensure that all agencies and centers in the state have the best training in order to implement the best licensing and TQRIS.

Subproject 7e: Grants for cohorts of centers to get targeted technical assistance through PreK Collaborative
Resources for this activity will help provide a wide variety of skills, materials, and training to associates in order to enhance the state's TQRIS and the PreK program.

Subproject 7f: Hire an Infant and Toddler specialist in each quadrant to work with multiple centers on TQRIS standards
Resources for this activity will be used to support a part time toddler specialist each year of the grant to work with multiple centers on TQRIS. Specifically, this activity will support the improvement in the level of quality with the infant and toddler centers as well as those after schools programs associated with these centers.

Subproject 7g: Integrate technical assistance resources across available funding streams to ensure all programs receive consistent messages and support about areas to focus for improvement
This project is a state owned activity. Therefore, there is not a budget associated with this project. The focus of this project is to ensure that all programs have effective communication channels to ensure that early child care centers and schools are receiving up-to-date information regarding teaching resources, parenting centers, materials and any other supporting details that can help the state system improve.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #7: Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS																
Subproject 7a: Expand an intensified technical assistance model that works closely with cohorts of programs located in high-poverty neighborhoods using the Mississippi Building Blocks model					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Create RFP for construction of additional classrooms that will accommodate the MBB model to high-poverty neighborhoods					X											
Additional classroom construction; furnishes, supplies						X	X	X	X							
Employ additional TA staff										X	X	X				
Subproject 7b: Implement training for centers and their directors through expansion of Mississippi Building Blocks model to support director's understanding on how to improvement steps on the TQRIS													X	X	X	X
Perform training sessions to staff and directors of existing and new centers that implement the MMB model													X	X	X	X
Provide financial support to enrich centers with resources, supplies, activities													X	X	X	X
Subproject 7c: Expand Excel by 5 to communities most in need providing immediate assistance to areas serving higher numbers of high needs students													X	X	X	X
Enroll and train additional early childhood educators to provide assistance with communities of High Needs students													X	X	X	X
Subproject 7d: Fund 4-6 exemplary centers to act as a model center and use these centers to train other centers on best practices for licensing, TQRIS, etc.					X	X	X	X	X	X						
Evaluate needs of surrounding centers					X	X										
Employ additional staff for training of best practices to surrounding centers							X	X								
Provide financial support to support these centers with resources, materials, guides, etc.									X	X						

Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Subproject 7e: Grants for cohorts of centers to get targeted technical assistance through the PreK collaborative			X		X	X	X									
Create RFP for grant application			X													
Assemble and review applications					X	X										
Award grants to centers for targeted technical assistance							X									
Subproject 7f: Hire an Infant and Toddler specialist in each quadrant to work with multiple centers on TQRIS standards					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hire infant/toddler specialists to work with centers on Mississippi's TQRIS standards					X											
Train specialists on the new Mississippi TQRIS						X										
Send out employed specialists to work with centers about the new state TQRIS							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Evaluate results														X	X	X
Subproject 7g: Integrate technical assistance resources across available funding streams to ensure all programs receive consistent messages and support about areas to focus for improvement								X		X		X				X
Perform support activities on programs' reception of resources, messages, regarding improvement of practices								X		X		X		X		X

Project 8: Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes

Project 8 includes 8 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 8 subprojects.

Subproject 8a: Implement a progression of credentials through messaging to institutions and organizations over the next four years; conduct curriculum alignment studies among systems

Resources for this activity will be used to support a detailed review of how the other 46 states develop their progression of credentials for their early learning educator workforce. Resources will also support outreach and education on this newly released progression of credentials to help

communicate and advertise to the higher education community, child care centers, parents, as well as potential incoming workforce.

Subproject 8b: Conduct studies on professional development to understand relationships with improving child outcomes and alignment with the steps on the TQRIS

Resources for this activity will be used to conduct studies on professional development to understand relationships with improving child outcomes and alignment with the steps on the TQRIS. Funds will be used each year to cover data submissions to LifeTracks as well as staff time to process and develop these reports for various stakeholders such as policy makers, higher education institutions, etc.

Subproject 8c: Conduct annual workforce studies on the Early Learning Educator Workforce to understand trends, retention, and areas or regions in highest need

Resources for this activity will be used to support data management and analysis. Resources will also support the assessment of available data, data systems, and data sources. This activity will also provide reports and dissemination to various stakeholders and fully develop NAEYC standards to support the data analysis efforts.

Subproject 8d: Implementation of a Birth to 5 teaching certificate through an add-on endorsement to the one recently approved for pre-K to Kindergarten

The SECAC Workforce Committee has already started implementing a 'Birth to 5' teaching certificate through and add-on endorsement to the one recently approved for pre-K to Kindergarten. As such, no additional funds are required.

Subproject 8e: Create an undergraduate endorsement in Early Childhood Education for current elementary education candidates

The SECAC workforce committee and teacher certification office at the Mississippi Department of Education are currently conducting activities in this area. As such, no additional funds are required.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project # 8: Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes																
Subproject 8a: Implement a Progression of credentials through messaging to institutions and organizations over the next four years; conduct curriculum alignment studies among systems	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review how other states developed their progression credentials	X															
Provide workshops to explain the new progression of credentials	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use system data to conduct alignment studies for improvement	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 8b: Conduct studies on professional development to understand relationships with improving child outcomes and alignment with the Steps on the TQRISD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop professional development study to determine relationships with improving child outcomes	x				x				x				x			
Collect data from study		x	x			x	x			x	x			x	x	
Analyze study data				x				x				x				x
Align results with the Steps on the TQRISD				x				x				x				x
Subproject 8c: Conduct annual workforce studies on the Early Learning educator workforce to understand trends, retention, and areas or regions in highest need	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop survey to assess trends, retention, and determine regions in highest need	x	x														
Collect data through various methods (telephone, web link, etc.)			x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	
Analyze data to determine where changes need to be made and/or where help is need				x				x				x				x
Subproject 8d: Implement early learning educator career lattice statewide	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Distribute information to child care centers regarding new career lattice	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Schedule meeting throughout the state to discuss career lattice with early childhood educators	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

MISSISSIPPI

Subproject 8e: Implementation of a Birth to 5 teaching certificate through an add-on endorsement to the one recently approved for pre-K to Kindergarten	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Align birth to 5 certification with the new preK to Kindergarten endorsement	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Inform early education candidates about the new teaching certificate	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 8f: Create an undergraduate endorsement in Early Childhood Education for current elementary education candidates	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review details of similar undergraduate endorsements	x	x															
Develop an outline for the undergraduate endorsement			x	x													
Create the undergraduate endorsement						x	x										
Inform current elementary education candidates about new endorsement	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Project 9: Expand on Current Efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention

Project 9 includes 4 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 4 subprojects.

Subproject 9a: Develop AA programs as well as align existing programs to the Early Learning standards at Community Colleges

Resources for this activity provide support for developing AA programs to prepare individuals for teaching and provide each individual with accurate and the basic knowledge and steps that are needed produce efficient students.

Subproject 9b: Develop Programs as well as support the alignment of existing programs to the state's revised Early Learning Standards for Bachelors and advanced degrees at four year institutions

Resources for this activity will be used to provide further educational opportunities and advancement in higher learning. This activity is tailored toward creating a Master's degree program specializing in Early Childhood Education for current elementary teachers. Many schools are now teaching children in Pre-K how to operated computers. This program will help

our teachers excel in providing the proper education and technology tools that will enable early childhood students in the state of Mississippi to be comfortable and aware of the advancing technology and educational tools that are transferring into the classroom.

Subproject 9c: Incentivize all Community Colleges to get NAEYC EC Associate Degree Credential

Resources for this activity will be used to support community college participation in NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). This activity will enable our young children to obtain the best education possible by receiving high quality education and resources material from various credible community colleges in the state of Mississippi.

Subproject 9d: Expand current T.E.A.C.H. programs in areas of high needs and significantly expand wages program offered to participating centers in areas serving large populations of high need students

The objective here is to improve high-need school areas. Through the T.E.A.C.H program, child care providers are able to expand their skills and knowledge through various teaching resources and training programs. The T.E.A.C.H programs provides high-need students with the opportunity to advance and further their education beyond high school. This program also better enables teachers to feel confident about the material that they are relaying to the students. Project 9d funds will also contribute to expanding wages to centers that have a large population of high-need students. This will ensure that the school system have the materials needed to succeed.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #9: Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention																
Subproject 9a: Develop AA programs as well as align existing programs to the Early Learning standards at Community Colleges	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Perform development of AA programs in early childhood education to additional Community Colleges	X	X	X													
Align existing AA programs at Community Colleges to the Early Learning Standards				X	X											
Employ additional instructors/professors to educate and train students						X	X	X								

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	C14	C15	C16
on early childhood curriculum																
Subproject 9b: Develop programs as well as support the alignment of existing programs to the state's revised Early Learning Standards for Bachelors and advanced degrees at 4 year institutions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Perform development of Bachelor's and Graduate programs in early childhood education to all 4-year institutions	X	X	X													
Align existing Bachelor programs at 4-year institutions to the Early Learning Standards				X	X											
Employ additional instructors/professors to educate and train students on early childhood undergraduate and graduate studies						X	X	X								
Subproject 9c: Incentivize all Community Colleges to get NAEYC EC Associate degree credential									x	x						
Inform all Community Colleges with early childhood education curriculum of the need to receive NAEYC credential									x	x						
Provide support to Community Colleges to acquire NAEYC Early childhood Associate degree credential										x						
Subproject 9d: Expand current T.E.A.C.H. programs in areas of high needs and significantly expand the WAGE$ program offered to participating centers in areas serving large populations of high needs students				X	X	X	X									
Provide financial support to T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ programs to expand them to children population with High Needs				X	X											
Employ additional, qualified staff in the area of children with High Needs for T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ programs						X	X	X								

Project 10: Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities

Project 10 includes 4 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 4 subprojects.

Subproject 10a: Develop state model for coaching for all EC educators through MDE - policy changes

Funds will be allocated for developing a state model of coaching for all EC educators through MDE and the policy changes.

Subproject 10b: Create Educator efficacy Endorsement for all TA providers which would be required for PD and TA providers

Funds will be used to create the educator efficiency endorsement for all TA providers which would be required PD and TA providers. This would be an expansion of the current MBB model for certification on effective TA. The accomplishment of this activity will also help increase educator efficiency and expand the current MBB model for certification of an effective TA, which will improve consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities and improve instruction in early learning programs.

Subproject 10c: Develop required online orientation for all new center-based teachers in all levels focusing on all five student domains of school readiness

Resources for this activity will be used to provide technical and subject area expertise necessary to develop and implement online orientation for all center-based teachers. Funds will also be used for the promotion of this orientation.

Subproject 10d: Increase level of on-site coaching and resources for center directors through the expansion of the Mississippi Building Blocks and project PREPARE

Funds will be used to support the training for coaches as well as the materials necessary for on-site coaching. Funds will also be allocated to increase resources for center directors by expanding Mississippi Building Blocks and Project PREPARE. The Mississippi Building Blocks model is based on improving teaching and learning, strengthening parenting skills, and increasing kindergarten-readiness. Project PREPARE provides professional development opportunities, support, and resources to enable state educational programs to better serve children with high-needs.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project # 10: Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities																
Subproject 10a: Develop state model for coaching for all EC educators through MDE - policy changes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review current policies	x	x										x	x			
Create a plan for the new state model for coaching			x	x										x	x	
Develop new state model for coaching EC educators					x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x
Subproject 10b: Create Educator Efficacy Endorsement for all TA providers which would be required for PD and TA providers (expansion of current MBB model for certification of effective TA)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review similar Educator Efficacy endorsements	x	x														
Create outline for endorsement			x	x												
Use outline to create the Educator Efficacy Endorsement					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 10c: Develop required online orientation for all new center-based teachers in all levels focusing on all 5 student domains for school readiness.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review similar online orientation programs	x	x														
Establish the online orientation structure in all areas of the 5 student domains for school readiness			x	x	x	x										
Develop the online orientation for all the new center-based teachers							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 10d: Increased level of on-site leadership coaching, as well resources for center directors through the expansion of the Mississippi Building Blocks model and Project Prepare.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hire additional staff to provide on-site leadership coaching	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Provide more resources for center directors	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Project 11: Improve child outcomes through research-based understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Project 11 includes 2 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 2 subprojects.

Subproject 11a: Implement a valid and reliable statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment aligned with state early learning standards that is deemed appropriate for populations served, including English language learners and children with disabilities

Existing state funds will be used to support a team of experts to review the assessment for validity and reliability and ensure the assessment is aligned with state early learning standards. A special emphasis will be given to high-needs children who will be given the assessment, including English language learners, children with disabilities, and children from low-income families.

Subproject 11b: Implement annual validity and reliability checks for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment as well as measures for cultural and developmental appropriateness

Funds will be used to support a team to review the assessment every year for validity and reliability and to identify measures for cultural and developmental appropriateness. This annual process will be time-intensive and will require a variety of quantitative and qualitative data experts. Regular travel costs will also be necessary to meet with early childhood and K-12 stakeholders on how to ensure that the Kindergarten Entry Assessment is fairly administered to all children, especially those with High Needs.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #11: Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment																
Subproject 11a: Implement a valid and reliable statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment aligned with state Early Learning standards that is deemed appropriate for population served, including English Language Learners and children with disabilities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Outline RFP for validity and reliability test from external providers	X															

Activity																			
Design a validity and reliability test for Kindergarten Readiness that will incorporate all elements of early childhood education, including items for ELL and children with disabilities	X	X	X																
Conduct the necessary statewide validity and reliability tests of Kindergarten Entry Assessment					X	X	X	X											
Subproject 11b: Implement annual validity and reliability checks for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment as well as measures for culturally and developmentally appropriateness								X		X	X	X							
Align the results of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment validity and reliability tests with the state's Early Learning Standards								X		X	X	X							
Allow for considerations of this alignment to children population with cultural and developmental needs													X	X					

Project 12: Improve professional development and educator skills to support statewide kindergarten entry assessment

Project 12 includes 3 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 3 subprojects.

Subproject 12a: Provide training to all early childhood educators across program types to build a unified, aligned view of a developmentally appropriate assessment

Funds will be used to provide specialized types of training to a wide variety of early childhood educators in the state. Train-the-trainer sessions will be covered by the allotted amount. Funds will then be used for travel and materials as needed in order to train all early childhood educators across numerous programs throughout the state.

Subproject 12b: Create "readiness teams" that include stakeholders from both systems in the elementary school communities of greatest need

Funds will be allocated for activities aimed at establishing "readiness teams" from both the early childhood and K-12 systems. The goal is to create these teams for communities with the most High Needs children and families. Training will be required for the teams to understand and

promote the state's early learning standards and to align early childhood and K-12 expectations and systems.

Subproject 12c: Train kindergarten teachers to implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment effectively

Funds will be will be used to provide training to all kindergarten teachers in the state on how to implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. A focus of the training will be how to assess children with different backgrounds and needs.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #12: Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment																
Subproject 12a: Provide training to all early childhood educators across program types to build a unified, aligned view of developmentally appropriate assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Develop training	x	x						x	x	x						
Schedule training			x	x							x	x				
Provide training					x	x	x						x	x	x	
Subproject 12b: Create "readiness teams" that include stakeholders from both systems, in the elementary school communities of greatest need	X	X	X													
Develop list of available stakeholders	x															
Develop plan to split teams		x														
Split list into teams			x													
Subproject 12c: Train kindergarten teachers to effectively implement the Kindergarten Entry Assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X										
Develop training plan	x	x														
Develop training schedule			x													
Provide training				x	x	x										
Subproject 12d: Implement a valid and reliable statewide Kindergarten entry assessment aligned with state Early Learning standards that is deemed appropriate for population served, including English Language Learners and children with disabilities	X		X	X		X										
Review any information regarding assessment creation	x															
Align standards			x	x												
Implement assessment						x										

MISSISSIPPI

Project 13: Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes

Project 13 includes 7 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 7 subprojects.

Subproject 13a: Provide annual reports on professional development effectiveness, student outcomes, and teacher effectiveness using data from the statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Funds will be used to utilize nSPARC resources and technical expertise to manage various stakeholder needs, conduct a needs assessment on existing reports, produce a gap analysis from existing reports, identify data elements for collection, and develop and disseminate new reports.

Subproject 13b: Develop common online intake form whereby parents can utilize a single point of entry to determine eligibility for programs

Funds will be used to utilize to understand existing functionality, conduct a needs assessment on existing systems, develop and test portal design with stakeholders, test and roll out the online intake form, and communicate how the intake form will work to all stakeholders. This will streamline the process of connecting people to early childhood services and allow parents to receive both the services that they need and the services they are eligible for.

Subproject 13c: Enhance conceptual data model to include data elements from early childhood programs across Mississippi; cross-walk all early childhood data elements with the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS); and identify and add elements not currently being collected

Funds will allow for nSPARC to leverage the design and architecture of Mississippi's P20W system (LifeTracks) and borrow from best practices and lessons learned in the development of LifeTracks. The conceptual data model that contains data elements from early childhood programs across Mississippi will also be updated and refined. Early childhood data elements will be aligned with CEDS during this process. The allotted amount will also allow for the identification and collection of data elements that are not currently in the P20W system.

Subproject 13d: Refine the early childhood system conceptual data model to develop the logical data model (LDM) and form the basis of the physical data model

Funds will be allocated to conduct analysis for the purposes of ensuring external validity and conduct a needs assessment during the first year. Funds will also support the maintenance and updating of the data models.

Subproject 13e: Conduct focus group sessions and surveys to identify how data should be presented in parent/family-level and program-level reports for early learning students

Funds will be used to conduct focus groups of relevant early learning stakeholders. The information from these focus group will be used to create surveys that will identify how data on child outcomes will be presented in parent/family- and program-level reports. The allotted amount will cover travel, conference supplies, and the resources necessary to write analyses of the focus group sessions and to conduct the surveys.

Subproject 13f: Leverage state-appropriated LifeTracks funding to lay the foundation for seamlessly linking the early childhood system with LifeTracks

This activity will be supported by current state funds to bring all early childhood data stakeholders to the table so that their data can be integrated into LifeTracks. Meetings with the LifeTracks Governing Board will be part of this process. Linking early childhood data to LifeTracks will also require a team of data experts that will be provided by nSPARC.

Subproject 13g: Develop data governance for data sharing and reporting

This activity will be supported by current state funds and will develop a statewide data governance plan under the guidance of the current SLDS Governing Board for data sharing and reporting. Once early childhood stakeholders are brought to the table, their opinions will be included in this process.

	2014				2015				2016				2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #13: Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes																
Subproject 13a: Provide annual reports on professional development effectiveness, student outcomes, and teacher effectiveness using data from the statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gather existing secondary data on professional development, student outcomes, teacher effectiveness	X	X														
Conduct focus group discussions to assess professional development, student, and teacher needs		X														
Create questionnaires based on findings from focus groups to investigate professional development effectiveness, student outcomes, teacher effectiveness			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Hire professional staff to coordinate research projects and bring together various stakeholders	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 13b: Develop common online intake form whereby parents can utilize a single point of entry to determine eligibility for programs	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Create a web-based platform that will enable parents to access information online	X	X	X													
Conduct focus group discussions to assess professional development, student, and teacher needs		X														
Conduct periodic parental training sessions about program eligibility using an online system				X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Launch marketing campaign to inform parents, community members, state agencies about a common online intake								X	X	X				X	X	X
Subproject 13c: Enhance conceptual data model to include data elements from early childhood programs across Mississippi; cross-walk all early childhood data elements with the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS); identify and add elements not currently being collected	X	X	X	X	X	X	X									

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Identify and add early childhood data elements not currently collected in the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS)	X	X														
Integrate all elements into the Common guidelines			X													
Test proof the new integrated CEDS to all early childhood programs				X	X	X	X									
Subproject 13d: Refine the early childhood system conceptual data model to develop the logical data model (LDM) and form the basis of the physical data model	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Create RFP for external validation of the model	X															
Perform validation of the model			X	X	X											
Conduct needs assessment				X	X	X										
Integrate any additions or changes to the model							X									
Maintain and update the data model								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subproject 13e: Conduct focus group sessions and surveys to identify how data should be presented in parent/family-level and program-level reports for early learning students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Set-up and execute focus group discussions in selected cities about ways of presenting data to parents/families	X	X														
Analyze the qualitative findings and implement them into survey questionnaires		X	X													
Conduct surveys statewide				X	X	X	X									
Analyze the quantitative results and present them to interested stakeholders								X	X	X						
Launch campaign to disseminate information about data sharing to parents/families											X	X	X			
Subproject 13f: Leverage state appropriated LifeTracks funding to lay the foundation for seamlessly linking the early childhood system with LifeTracks				X	X	X	X	X	X							
Employ research team focused on connecting LifeTracks data to early childhood education data				X	X	X										
Create a database will all data (LifeTracks and early childhood) linked, and perform the necessary security actions to safeguard these data								X	X	X						

MISSISSIPPI

												X	X	X		X	X		
Subproject 13g: Develop data governance for data sharing and reporting												X	X	X		X	X		
Create a web-based system that allows data to be accessed, shared, and reported												X	X	X					
Train and give access to the web-based data system to all participating stakeholders																X	X		

Project 14: Strengthen family and community involvement in local reforms for early learning

Project 14 includes 9 subprojects designed to achieve our goals. The next few paragraphs will outline these 9 subprojects.

Subproject 14a: Provide scale-up and O&M costs for data system for all Excel by 5 grantees

Funds will be used to scale up the data system for Excel by 5, a process that will require data management expertise. This amount will also cover the O&M costs necessary to maintain the data system as efforts to align the subprojects in Project 14 continue.

Subproject 14b: Create program for local Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) to support best practices and help educate families

Funds will allow MSDH to expand rural health services with the addition of at least three rural health clinics. This amount will also allow for the expansion of Making A Plan (MAP) teams, which are multidisciplinary teams that review mental health cases concerning young children who have serious emotional disturbances and who are at immediate risk for an inappropriate 24-hour institutional placement. Funds will also be used to increase the multidisciplinary expertise of our teams so that high-needs children will not be left out of the initiative to increase access to high-quality early learning and development to all children. The amount allotted will help MAP team experts identify community-based services and resources to ensure that high-needs children with emotional disabilities are not excluded from early education opportunities.

Subproject 14c: Expand use of health and developmental screening and referral rates for all young children within the medical home by integrating routine developmental screening into well-child visits

Support for this activity will help MSDH to increase the usage and referral of health and developmental screening for High Needs children. The goal is to ensure that all young children with special needs are screened properly. Funds here will also allow MSDS to continue to reach these children after screenings with visits to their home. This element of the subproject will provide families with a wealth of knowledge about the needs of their children and create not only a sense of urgency but also a sense of hope in regard to the educational outcomes of their children. Finally, funds will be used to help fund an outreach communication campaign so that communities can be engaged; the priorities of families and communities must be aligned so that all children with High Needs can be reached and developed.

Subproject 14d: Expand Excel by 5 outreach in "transformational communities" to include early learning standards awareness and education

Resources will be allocated to develop and implement a significant outreach campaign about Excel By 5, an initiative that seeks to transform communities into child-friendly places for all children, especially those with high-needs. The amount will cover training that will prepare individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to communicate the early learning standards of Mississippi to a variety of communities that participate in the Excel by 5 initiative. This outreach effort will have transportation, meal, lodging, and supplies costs that will be covered by the allotted amount.

Subproject 14e: Utilize Mississippi Children's Museum as parent outreach/training on early learning standards and system

Fund will support the coordination between MDE and the Mississippi Children's Museum on strategies to inform parents on the early learning standards and system of the state. Costs will include materials about early learning standards and the development of a stand in the Mississippi Children's Museum that will illustrate the importance of addressing the challenges of providing high-quality early learning and development to children with high-needs.

Subproject 14f: Leverage existing family support programs to support children with high-needs and their families

Resources will be used to allow MSDH to coordinate with programs such as Allies for Quality Care and Excel by 5 to scale up their services to reach more high-needs children and families.

MSDH will require data expertise to identify the children with High Needs in their system and the resources to link these children to existing family support programs in their communities.

Subproject 14g: Collect and analyze data to improve practice, prioritize use of resources, and track progress for the purposes of parental education and understanding through existing parent portals sponsored by MDHS

Funds will be used to work with subject matter experts to collect, integrate, and analyze data from multiple programs involved with parental outreach. Funding will be used to develop a strategic plan that identifies a benchmark for parental outreach based on child outcomes and objectives to assist all relevant programs with their efforts to educate parents.

Subproject 14h: Expand current home visiting programs to support outreach to communities servicing children with High Needs (low-income and rural)

Funds will be used to help expand current home visiting programs so that more children with High Needs in more isolated low-income and rural areas can be served. The expansion of current home visiting programs is essential as it directly relates to the accomplishment of the goal described in Subproject 14c above.

Subproject 14i: Improve subsidy policies for low-income families to improve participation and continuation of services for children

This activity will be supported by state funds. MDHS will significantly increase funding/time limits of its child care subsidies in order to encourage participation of all families in early childhood care. These improved subsidy policies will also encourage families who are already participating to continue prioritizing early learning and development for their children. This subproject will also emphasize the participation of high-needs families.

2014	2015	2016	2017

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Project #14: Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning																
Subproject 14a: Provide scale up and O&M costs for data system for all Excel By 5 grantees	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Gather budget information	x															
Develop budget		x	x													
Develop data system for the Excel by 5 grantees				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Subproject 14b: Create program for local Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) to support best practices and help educate families	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Brainstorm ideas for program	x	x	x	x												
Create program					x	x	x	x	x							
Subproject 14c: Expanded use of a health and developmental screening and referral rates for all young children within the medical home by integrating routine developmental screening into well-child visits	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Brainstorm expansion options	x	x														
Develop health expansion plan			x	x	x	x										
Implement health expansion plan							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 14d: Expand Excel by 5 Outreach in "transformational communities" to include early learning standards awareness and education.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop programs using early learning standards awareness and education	x	x	x	x					x	x			x	x		
Align current programs with new programs					x	x										
Implement Expansions							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 14e: Utilize Mississippi Children's museum as parent outreach / training on early learning standards and system	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop training/outreach for parents	x	x														
Schedule training			x	x												
Provide actual training					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 14f: Leveraging existing family support programs to support children with High Needs and their families	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify promising practices and review potential investments with SECAC review board		x	x													

Scale up identified programs through grant making process				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 14g: Collect and analyze data to improve practice, prioritize use of resources, and track progress for the purposes of parental education and understanding through existing parent portals sponsored by DHS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Collect data and analyze data	x	x	x	x												
Prioritize resources to be used					x	x										
Track progress							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 14h: Expand current home visiting programs to support outreach to communities servicing children with High Needs (low income and rural)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Determine where expansions can be made	x															
Develop plan for expansions		x	x	x												
Implement expansions					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Subproject 14i: Improve subsidy policies for low income families to improve participation and continuation of services for children	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review current policies	x	x														
Develop/Design new policies			x	x	x	x	x	x								
Implement new policies									x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Subproject 14j: Support the alignment and improvement of TQRIS involvement, technical assistance activities and professional development support for early learning centers serving the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to be culturally and developmentally appropriate.	X	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Schedule initial training with the MS Band of Choctaw Indians	x															
Implementing professional development		x				x				x				x		
Aligning Standards				x				x				x				x

Budget Part II - Narrative

Describe, in the text box below, the overall structure of the State's budget for implementing the State Plan, including
- *A list of each Participating State Agency, together with a description of its budgetary and project responsibilities;*
- *A list of projects and a description of how these projects taken together will result in full implementation of the State Plan;*
- *For each project:*
  - ○ *The designation of the selection criterion or competitive preference priority the project addresses;*
  - ○ *An explanation of how the project will be organized and managed in order to ensure the implementation of the High-Quality Plans described in the selection criteria or competitive preference priorities; and*
- *Any information pertinent to understanding the proposed budget for each project.*

The following sections provide an overview of each of the six Participating State Agencies as well as the lead agency. These budgets correlate to the projects that each participating state agency will manage, and it provides an overview of the state agency allocations as well as the requested RTT-ELC funds. In cases where there is no requested funding based on a specific Budget Category (example "Supplies," "Training Stipends," etc.) this has been omitted from the table as well as a narrative to simplify presentation for the reviewers.

SECAC, Office of the Governor

SECAC is the official project lead and is involved as the subproject lead on 5 projects, including the RTTELC Technical Assistance that is $400,000 over the life of the grant. In Project 1, SECAC is in the subproject lead on 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1e, where almost all touch on the 5 goals of the entire project.

1a is the overall RTTELC management of the project, contracting out for part time of ECI staff to act as the project director for the grant, travel to support outreach projects and messaging state goals. These funds are indicated in the Contractual area of the SECAC budget. SECAC will issue two contracts to support Mississippi with Performance Management of the RTT-ELC grant

as well as understanding Change Management for ensuring successful culture change to support the reform efforts. When contracting with these external firms, we will frontload 75 percent of the funds in the first year. There will also be a one-time cost for SECAC the first year that is also contracted out through a reputable firm that will be responsible for the sustainability plan for the state of Mississippi in Year 1 to begin planning for transitions of the end of the grant activities in Year 4.

SECAC will assist with subproject 7g in expanding technical assistance efforts to support centers to participate and improve with the state's TQRIS. This is a state owned activity that will integrate technical assistance resources across available funding streams to ensure all programs receive consistent messages and support about areas to focus for improvement.

During 8b, the focus for SECAC is to improve the early childhood educator workforce credentialing and impact on Child Outcomes. SECAC will conduct studies on professional development to understand relationships with improving child outcomes and alignment with the steps on the TQRIS. The annual costs would cover data submissions in Subproject 8b to LifeTracks as well as staff time to process and develop reports for various stakeholders and policy makers, higher education institutions and other stakeholders.

8d and 8e continue to strive for the improvement of early childhood educator workforce and credentialing and impact on child outcomes, and are both funded by the state of Mississippi to implement a Birth to 5 teaching certification through an add-on endorsement to the one recently approved for pre-K to Kindergarten and we are currently working on creating an undergraduate endorsement in Early Childhood Education for current elementary education candidates. SECAC continues throughout 10a to support existing and entering EC educators through high quality professional development opportunities. The funds requested during this time are the cost for FTE to develop a state model for coaching for all EC educators through MDE policy changes and report on the structure. Lastly under SECAC the $100,000 a year for the RTTELC Technical Assistance is listed under this agency.

The projects listed for SECAC will be broken out as follows Personnel $273,411, Fringe Benefits $90,226, Travel $54,545, Contractual $727,273, Other $181,818, totaling the Direct Costs to equal $1,327,273 during the four years of the grant. Indirect costs will total to $132,727

with the approved rate of 10%. After including the RTTELC Technical Assistance, the total for the four years is $1,860,000.

Budget Table for SECAC

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR/SECAC				
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1 (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))				
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	68,353	68,353	68,353	68,353	**273,412**
2. Fringe Benefits	22,556	22,556	22,556	22,556	**90,226**
3. Travel	13,636	13,636	13,636	13,636	**54,544**
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	**0**
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	**0**
6. Contractual	331,818	131,818	131,818	131,818	**727,272**
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	**0**
8. Other	45,455	45,455	45,455	45,455	**181,818**
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	**481,818**	**281,818**	**281,818**	**281,818**	**1,327,272**
10. Indirect Costs*	48,182	28,182	28,182	28,182	**132,728**
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	**0**
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	**630,000**	**410,000**	**410,000**	**410,000**	**1,860,000**
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan					**0**
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**630,000**	**410,000**	**410,000**	**410,000**	**1,860,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR/SECAC				
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2 **(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))**				
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	380,000	160,000	160,000	160,000	**860,000**
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	**200,000**
Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	0	0	0	0	**0**
Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's	0	0	0	0	**0**

Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes				
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	0	0	0	0	0
RTTELC Technical Assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
Total Statewide Budget	**630,000**	**410,000**	**410,000**	**410,000**	**1,860,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

Mississippi Department of Education

MDE is involved in all but Project 13 in the fourteen projects proposed. In Subproject 1d, no funds are needed to develop a fully functioning Early Learning office at MDE to coordinate the alignment and programs offered for early learning transitions to elementary. This will be completed by the year 2 of the grant, pending award of the grant, and focus on all five of the Goals set forth in the project.

Subproject 2b will improve alignment, quality and understanding of Early Learning Standards and MDE will test fidelity of use of Early Learning Standards for three-year-old and four-year-old children in the classroom. The funds will provide an annual assessment using an external contractor to test the fidelity within classrooms. This contract will provide an annual evaluation as well as a summary report on the recommendations and suggestions for improving the professional development and other activities that can be used to improve the connection of the standards and their implementation. This subproject will focus on Goal 1 initiatives.

The efforts that MDE will put into Project 3 are all three of the subprojects. Project 3 is to expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of Early Learning Standards. 3a will implement training for all standards through expansion of the Mississippi Building Blocks model to child care centers. The funds requested will increase the training available for the early learning centers, provide funds to improve professional development opportunities, with the goal that all centers will be using these standards by the end of year 1. 3b will expand the Petal Parenting Center model and implement Parents as Teachers model to

educate families on the guidelines and systems. The funds will be used for developing resources, support for implementing parents Center model, child care for parents during these sessions, transportation as needed and other services that will allow for the support of expanding the parenting centers to the districts in the state. 3c will expand the Children's Museum Outreach for technical assistance in Early Learning Standards for families. These funds will be used for expanding the number of regional off-site workshops and family events, expanding the capacity for the current online educator and parent portal, equipment and supplies, as well as supporting a part time staff person at the Mississippi Children's Museum to support this work.

MDE is responsible for Subproject 4a, that focuses on Goal 1 and promotes statewide understanding and awareness of Early Learning Standards. The funds will help expand Excel by 5 in "transformational communities" to include early learning standards awareness and education.

Project 5 will focus on Goal 2 and improving the administration, quality and administration of the state's TQRIS. MDE will have one FTE to manage the QRS, develop technical assistance resources and how to guide the entering programs, data sharing with Life Tracks, provide support to centers with their data collection, help administer parent reports, and manage the evaluation efforts under contracts of the TQRIS. MDE will also process for continuous quality improvement and evaluation in TQRIS through annual evaluation and annual reports. The annual evaluation through a contract for improving the quality and feedback from early learning centers. Reports will be provided by nSPARC on Early Learning Standards that lead to positive child outcomes.

Also focusing on Goal 2, Project 6 allows MDE to focus on promoting participation and encouraging publicly funded centers to participate in TQRIS. Subproject 6a expands Parents as Teachers model to educate families and communities on the guidelines and systems and the creation of parent reports. 6c will increase participation in the TQRIS for exempt programs and support 1 and 2-star programs to attain a 3-star or higher rating through the Mississippi Building Block model and incentive awards program model for centers. 6d will use the Excel by 5 model to identify and recruit clergy leaders of religiously affiliated programs to participate. These

funds given will be provided for annual travel, events, and webinars in person to meetings to promote the TQRIS.

Project 7, which continues to focus on Goal 2, is responsible by MDE in order to expand technical assistance efforts to support centers to participate and improve within the state's TQRIS. 7a focuses on expanding an intensified technical assistance model that works closely with cohorts of programs located in high-poverty neighborhoods using the Mississippi Building Blocks model, this expansion would allow an additional 100 high-needs classrooms. Implementing training for centers and their directors through expansion of Mississippi Building Blocks model to support directors' understanding on how to improve the steps on the TQRIS. Support for the additional classrooms would allow for additional staff, resources, and other supportive activities for training adding centers to improve their current steps. 7c will expand Excel by 5 to communities most in need providing immediate assistance to areas servicing higher numbers on high needs students. 7e will allow grants for cohorts of centers to get targeted technical assistance through the Pre-K collaborative.

During Projects 8-10 the focus changes to Goal 3. Project 8a is intended to improve the early childhood educator workforce credentialing and impact on child outcomes. MDE plans to implement a progression of credentials though messaging to institutions and organizations over the next four years. They will conduct curriculum alignment studies among systems. This will involve a one-time scan for how the other 46 states develop their progression of credentials for their early learning educator workforce. Subproject 9d expands the current T.E.A.C.H. programs in areas of high needs and significantly expand the WAGE$ program offered to participating centers in areas serving large populations of high needs students. 10b for basic fact finding info needed to create educator efficiency endorsement for all TA providers which would be required for PD and TA providers. This supports Project 10's effort in supporting existing and entering EC educators through high quality professional development opportunities. 10d will increase the level of on-site leadership coaching, as well resources for center directors thought the expansion of Mississippi Building Blocks model and Project prepare.

Project 11 contains 2 subprojects that are created to improve child outcomes through research based understanding of statewide implementation of kindergarten entry assessment. Subproject

11a focus on Goal 3 while Subproject 11b focuses on Goal 4. 11a will be state funded and will implement a valid and reliable statewide kindergarten entry assessment aligned with state early learning standards that is deemed appropriate for population served, including the English Language Learners and children with disabilities. Subproject 11b will implement annual validity and reliability checks for Kindergarten Entry Assessment as well as measures for culturally and developmentally appropriateness.

MDE is the lead for all subprojects in Project 12 which will improve professional development and educator skills to support statewide kindergarten entry assessment and are all focused on Goal 4. 12a will provide training to all early childhood educators across program types to build a unified and alighted view of developmentally appropriate assessment. Subproject 12b will create 'readiness teams' that include stakeholders from both systems, in the elementary school communities of greatest need.

Project 14's focus is on strengthening the family and community involvement in local reforms for early learning. MDE plans in Subproject 14a to provide scale up and O&M costs for data system for all Excel by 5 grantees. In 14d the expanding of Excel by 5 outreach in 'transformational communities' to include early learning standards, awareness and education. 14e will utilize Mississippi Children's museum as a parent outreach and training on early learning standards and system. Lastly, MDE will use 14j to outreach to the Choctaw Indians, see C3 for details.

MDE has budgeted over the 4 years of the contract to pay $1,060,821 in salaries and $34,183 in fringe benefits. They have estimated to spend $40,000 in supplies, $1,240,000 in contractual, $2,000,000 in training stipends, and that totals the direct costs to be $4,685,004. Indirect costs at the approved rate for MDE is 12.7% and equal to the estimation of $594,996. Funds to be distributed to localities, early learning intermediary organizations and participating programs and other partners totals $17,840,000. MDE's estimated budget over the 4 years of the contract is $23,120,000.

Budget Table for MDE

	MS DEPT OF EDUCATION				
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1 (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Category	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grant Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
1. Personnel	265,205	265,205	265,205	265,205	**1,060,820**
2. Fringe Benefits	86,046	86,046	86,046	86,046	**344,184**
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	**0**
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	**0**
5. Supplies	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	**40,000**
6. Contractual	310,000	310,000	310,000	310,000	**1,240,000**
7. Training Stipends	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	**2,000,000**
8. Other	0	0	0	0	**0**
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	**1,171,251**	**1,171,251**	**1,171,251**	**1,171,251**	**4,685,004**
10. Indirect Costs*	148,749	148,749	148,749	148,749	**594,996**
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	4,460,000	4,460,000	4,460,000	4,460,000	**17,840,000**
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	**0**
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**23,120,000**
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	**0**
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**23,120,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

MS Dept of Education

Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))

Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	550,000	550,000	550,000	550,000	**2,200,000**
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	**800,000**
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	**1,400,000**
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	510,000	510,000	510,000	510,000	**2,040,000**
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	1,650,000	1,650,000	1,650,000	1,650,000	**6,600,000**
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	**40,000**
Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	**3,000,000**
Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	260,000	260,000	260,000	260,000	**1,040,000**
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	**800,000**
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	**2,600,000**
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's	0	0	0	0	**0**

Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes					
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	550,000	550,000	550,000	550,000	**2,200,000**
Total Statewide Budget	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**5,780,000**	**23,120,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)

MDHS keeps their projected accomplishments over the course of the four year project primarily on Goals 1 and 2. Those goals are to expand the usage of consistent early learning standards that are aligned with K-3 standards and serve as the basis for all early learning programs in Mississippi and to expand TQRIS system at a scale that promotes quality improvements and improves access to quality for high-needs children. MDHS will be involved in Projects 2, 5, 6, 7, and 14 and specifically in Subprojects 2a, 5b, 6b, 7f, and 14i.

As MDHS helps improve alignment, quality, and understanding of EL standards, they will adopt, align and test fidelity on an annual basis of said standards for three-year-old and four-year-old children with the infants and toddlers standards. The state will pay for the adoption and alignment of the infant and toddler standards to the early learning standards, however we are requesting funding to test the fidelity annually. These funds will be allocated to an internal organization in the state that has that evaluation capacity. MDHS is also focused on improving the administration, quality and administration of the state's TQRIS. This state-funded effort will revise the current TQRIS to align with the national best practices and incorporate Health promotion practices.

Subproject 6b is where MDHS will promote participation and encourage publicly funded centers to participate in TQRIS. We are requesting a one-time contract to explore and provide data to support and increase in reimbursement rates and launch a tiered reimbursement policy that allows for high-quality programs to access up to 100% of market rate for purchase of care children.

During Subproject 7f, MDHS will expand technical assistance efforts to support centers to participate and improve within the state's TQRIS. The institution plan to hire an infant and toddler specialist in each quadrant to work with multiple centers on TQRIS standards. Subproject 14i, MDHS will strengthen family and community involvement in local reforms for early learning by improving subsidy policies for low income families to improve participation and continuation of services for children. This will be funded by the state.

The estimated total for Personnel costs for the duration of the project is $200,137 along with the estimate fringe benefits of $65,318. Travel will be a large component of making this portion successful and we are allocating roughly $98,182. We also expect to spend during the course of the project about $36,364 on various supplies and are going to contract out the first year to an outside agency costing $36,364. Evaluation costs to an internal organization that will have the capacity to test fidelity of the EL standards will be around $90,908, making the total of all direct costs for MDHS equaling $527,273. The indirect costs at the approved rate of 10% will total to be $52,727. MDHS plans to allocate $440,000 to distribute for the purpose of developing the centers as well as parents of the centers. Funds set aside for MDHS total to $1,020,000.

MS DEPT OF HUMAN SERVICES				
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1				
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))				
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	50,034	50,034	50,034	50,034	**200,137**
2. Fringe Benefits	16,330	16,330	16,330	16,330	**65,318**
3. Travel	24,546	24,546	24,546	24,546	**98,182**
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	**0**
5. Supplies	9,091	9,091	9,091	9,091	**36,364**
6. Contractual	36,364	0	0	0	**36,364**
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	**0**
8. Other	22,727	22,727	22,727	22,727	**90,908**
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	**159,091**	**122,727**	**122,727**	**122,727**	**527,272**
10. Indirect Costs*	15,909	12,273	12,273	12,273	**52,728**
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	110,000	110,000	110,000	110,000	**440,000**

12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0		0	0	**0**
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	**285,000**	**245,000**	**245,000**	**245,000**	**1,020,000**
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	**0**
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**285,000**	**245,000**	**245,000**	**245,000**	**1,020,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

MS DEPT OF HUMAN SERVICES					
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Project	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grnat Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	**100,000**
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	60,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	**120,000**

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	**800,000**
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	0	0	0	0	**0**
Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	0	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Total Statewide Budget	**285,000**	**245,000**	**245,000**	**245,000**	**1,020,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

Mississippi Department of Health (MSDH)

MSDH is budgeted for $5,460,000, and have allocated $1,800,000 to be distributed to partners. The indirect costs are expected to be $521,064 using their approved rate of 16.6%. Personnel is expected to total to $257,936 and the fringe benefits to $85,118. The expected contractual obligation will be $857,633, training stipends to be $337,064, and other costs to be $1,601,186.

MSDH will be involved in 4 Projects (5, 6, 7, 14). The subprojects that MSDH will sublead are 5c, 6e, 7d, 14b, 14c, 14f, and 14h and focus on our 2nd Goal. In 5c, MSDH has a small contract awarded for a one-time assessment of our alignment of licensing standards with our TQRIS.

This assessment would scan 5 to 10 other states and provide basic practices for how we should approach this. The funds would also provide understanding of how the data from our licensing center can be integrated in the state of Mississippi's early learning data system.

Subproject 6e will be used for training 6-10 additional licensing and technical assistance monitors, this will encourage center participation through coordination of technical assistance and monitoring visits by licensing the staff. 7d focuses on expanding technical assistance efforts to support centers to participate and improve within the state's TQRIS. MSDH plans to fund 4-6 exemplary centers to act as a model center and use these centers to train other centers on the best practices for licensing and TQRIS.

MSDH's hand in Project 14, to strengthen family and community involvement in local reforms for early learning are demonstrated by adding rural health clinic expansion and MAP teams to create a program for local Child Care Health Consultants to support best practices and help educate families. MSDH will also outreach their communication campaign to see if there is a better screening tool for special education kids. MSDH will use the funds to leverage existing family support programs like Allies for Quality Care, Excel by 5 and others to support children with high-needs and their families. Lastly, this agency will use the funds to expand current home visiting programs to support outreach to communities servicing children with high-needs in both low income and rural areas.

MS DEPT OF HEALTH				
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1				
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))				
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	60,357	66,619	66,619	66,619	260,215
2. Fringe Benefits	19,000	21,280	21,280	21,280	82,840
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	259,408	199,408	199,408	199,408	857,633
7. Training Stipends	84,266	84,266	84,266	84,266	337,063
8. Other	400,297	400,297	400,297	400,297	1,601,186
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	823,328	771,870	771,870	771,870	3,138,937
10. Indirect Costs*	136,672	128,130	128,130	128,130	521,063

11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	**1,800,000**
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	**0**
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	**1,410,000**	**1,350,000**	**1,350,000**	**1,350,000**	**5,460,000**
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	**0**
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**1,410,000**	**1,350,000**	**1,350,000**	**1,350,000**	**5,460,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

MS DEPT OF HEALTH					
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2 **(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))**					
Project	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grant Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	0	0	0	0	0
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	0
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	0
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	0

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	60,000				**60,000**
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	**1,800,000**
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	0	0	0	0	**0**
Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	**800,000**	**800,000**	**800,000**	**800,000**	**3,200,000**
0	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Total Statewide Budget	**1,410,000**	**1,350,000**	**1,350,000**	**1,350,000**	**5,460,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL)

IHL will work with SECAC to expand on current efforts for ECE certification recruitment and retention. IHL plans to develop programs as well as support the alignment of existing programs to the state's revised Early Learning Standards for Bachelors and advanced degrees at 4 year institutions. The IHL is already beginning this at the University of Mississippi where they created a Master's degree specializing in Early Childhood Education for current elementary teachers. IHL is in line with Goal 3, promoting consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities to improve instruction in early learning programs.

IHL is budgeted a total of $200,000 over the life of the project. Personnel is expected to cost $25,574 in salary and $8,440 in fringe benefits annually. Direct costs allocated to IHL are estimated to be $136,055 and the indirect costs are estimated to be $63,946. Their approved indirect cost rate is 47%.

MS INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING				
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1				
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))				
Budget Category	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grant Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
1. Personnel	25,574	25,574	25,574	25,574	**102,296**
2. Fringe Benefits	8,440	8,440	8,440	8,440	**33,758**
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	**0**
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	**0**
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	**0**
6. Contractual	0	0	0	0	**0**
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	**0**
8. Other	0	0	0	0	**0**
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	34,014	34,014	34,014	34,014	**136,054**
10. Indirect Costs*	15,986	15,986	15,986	15,986	**63,944**
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	**0**
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance		0	0	0	**0**
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	**50,000**	**50,000**	**50,000**	**50,000**	**200,000**
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	**0**
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**50,000**	**50,000**	**50,000**	**50,000**	**200,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

MS INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING					
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2 **(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))**					
Project	**Grant Year 1 (a)**	**Grant Year 2 (b)**	**Grant Year 3 (c)**	**Grant Year 4 (d)**	**Total (e)**
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	0	0	0	0	0
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	0
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	0
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	0
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	0
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	0	0	0	0	0
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	0
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	0	0	0	0	0
Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	**200,000**
Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	0	0	0	0	0
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	0
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	0
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	0	0	0	0	0
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	0	0	0	0	0

	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Statewide Budget	**50,000**	**50,000**	**50,000**	**50,000**		**200,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB)

MCCB will be working on Project 9 and 10, specifically Subprojects 9a, 9c and 10c. In 9a, they will develop AA programs as well as align existing programs to the Early Learning Standards at Community Colleges. MCCB will then in Subproject 9c incentivizes all Community Colleges to get NAEYC EC Associated degree credential. By doing this it will provide support for applying for the NAEYC certification. MCCB will develop required online orientation in Subproject 10c for all new center-based teachers in all levels focusing on all 5 student domains for school readiness in order to support existing and entering EC educators through high quality professional development opportunities. The Mississippi Community College Board is focusing their efforts on Goal 3, which again is promoting consistent and high-quality professional development opportunities to improve instruction in early learning programs.

The requested total cost for MCCB is $1,000.000. We forecasted the amount spent in personnel over the four years to be $539,531 and the fringe benefits are estimated to be $178,045. We expect the cost of supplies needed to complete the previously stated subprojects to be $10,000 annually. This would make the total direct costs allocated to MCCB at $946,970 and the indirect costs at the MCCB approved rate of 5.6% to be $53,030.

MS BOARD FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES					
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1 (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	134,883	134,883	134,883	134,883	**539,532**
2. Fringe Benefits	44,511	44,511	44,511	44,511	**178,044**
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	**0**
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	**0**
5. Supplies	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	**40,000**
6. Contractual	47,348	47,348	47,348	47,348	**189,392**

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	**0**
8. Other	0	0	0	0	**0**
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	**236,742**	**236,742**	**236,742**	**236,742**	**946,968**
10. Indirect Costs*	13,258	13,258	13,258	13,258	**53,032**
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	**0**
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	**0**
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	**250,000**	**250,000**	**250,000**	**250,000**	**1,000,000**
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	**0**
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**250,000**	**250,000**	**250,000**	**250,000**	**1,000,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

MS BOARD FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES					
Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2 **(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))**					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	**600,000**
Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	0	0	0	0	**0**
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	0	0	0	0	**0**
0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total Statewide Budget	**250,000**	**250,000**	**250,000**	**250,000**	**1,000,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

Mississippi State University, The National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC)

nSPARC will be responsible for parts of Project 8, Project 13, and Project 14 and nine subprojects, Subproject 8c, 13a, 13g, and 14g. Two of these nine subprojects are funded through existing state funds, which leaves seven subprojects we are requesting funds. nSPARC's concentration is on Goals 3 and 4, which is to promote consistent and high-quality professional

development opportunities as well as improve instruction in early learning programs and scale a high-quality kindergarten assessment that informs early elementary teachers, early learning programs, parents, and policy makers.

The allocated amount for nSPARC is $4,640,000, will be treated as a contractor, since nSPARC operates as a service center and has an approved hourly rate of $110.12. Over the 4 years of the project, nSPARC will allocate 42,136 hours devoted to the Race to the Top funds. An estimated 5-5.25 FTE will be needed annually to be committed to RTTELC. All funds are budgeted evenly, with the exception indicated in 13d, where nSPARC is requesting that $300,000 be front loaded for external validity and needs assessment purposes. The Funds requested in year one, totals $1,385,000 and in years two, three, and four estimated to be $1,085.00.00 nSPARC charges an approved indirect cost rate of 26% of modified total direct costs. For this project, indirect costs are estimated to be $957,460 and the direct costs to be estimated at $3,682,540.

In an effort to improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and impact on child outcomes, nSPARC will use funding indicated in 8c to conduct annual workforce studies on the Early Learning Educator Workforce to understand trends, retention, and areas or regions in the highest needs.

nSPARC Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1 (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel					0
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	1,099,206	861,111	861,111	861,111	3,682,539
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	1,099,206	861,111	861,111	861,111	3,682,539
10. Indirect Costs*	285,794	223,889	223,889	223,889	957,461
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0		0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	1,385,000	1,085,000	1,085,000	1,085,000	4,640,000

14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	**1,385,000**	**1,085,000**	**1,085,000**	**1,085,000**	**4,640,000**

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first $25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside $400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

nSPARC

Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2 **(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))**					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
RTTELC Management and Transformation Support	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve alignment, quality and understanding of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand technical assistance efforts to support professional development of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Promote statewide understanding and awareness of EL Standards	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve the administration, quality, and administration of the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Promote Participation and Encourage Publicly Funded Centers to Participate in TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Expand Technical Assistance Efforts to Support Centers to Participate and Improve within the state's TQRIS	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve the Early Childhood Educator Workforce Credentialing and Impact on Child Outcomes	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**

Expand on current efforts for ECE Certification Recruitment, and Retention	0	0	0	0	**0**
Support Existing and Entering EC Educators through High Quality Professional Development Opportunities	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Child Outcomes through Research Based Understanding of statewide implementation of Kindergarten Entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Improve Professional Development and Educator Skills to Support Statewide Kindergarten entry Assessment	0	0	0	0	**0**
Integrated Statewide Early Learning System to Support State's Understanding of Improving Child Outcomes	1,185,000	885,000	885,000	885,000	**3,840,000**
Strengthen Family and Community Involvement in Local Reforms for Early Learning	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	**400,000**
0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total Statewide Budget	**1,385,000**	**1,085,000**	**1,085,000**	**1,085,000**	**4,640,000**
Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.					
Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.					
The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.					